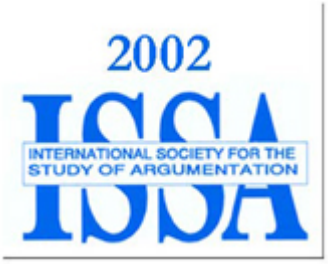
ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Rhetorical Criticism Of The Debate On The Future Of The European Union Strategic Options And Foundational Understandings



1. Introduction

With the formation of the European Convention, which was set up at the Laeken Summit of the European Council on the 14th and 15th of December 2001, the debate on the future of the EU has been institutionalised. The members of the Convention will be considering a number of broad questions about the possible future developments, and the result of their discussions will be recommendations for a new treaty, a treaty, which must be drafted, refined and ratified before the end of 2004**[i]**. The Convention does not begin the debate from scratch, but picks up on agendas and ideas, which have been put forward by national leaders and other significant participants in the less formally structured, but no less significant discussions that led to the formation of the Convention.

In this paper, I investigate two of the earlier contributions to the debate on the future of the EU in order to explore how the debate was shaped. I work within a dual analytical framework, arguing that any rhetorical utterance must be seen as both a result of the strategic options from which the speaker can choose, and of the foundational understandings that sets limits on the speaker's choices. The first part of the paper is a presentation of the theoretical argument for the proposed method of rhetorical criticism. The second and main section is an application of that method to two comparable speeches by the Spanish Prime Minister, José María Aznar, and his British counterpart, Tony Blair. These two speeches have been chosen for analysis, because I see them as being central to and representative of the formative stages of the debate on the EU's future. In the third and final section, I shall present particular conclusions about the two speeches and generalise my claim to state that rhetorical criticism is a valuable

tool to understanding and improving the ongoing European debate.

2. Rhetoric as response to a situation and as construction of meaning

In the view of Lloyd F. Bitzer, rhetoric is situational, meaning that rhetorical utterances arise as responses to situations, and that they are given significance by the particular situation from which they arise. In Bitzer's opinion, an utterance is rhetorical only in so far as it can be used to solve a problem, and the function of each utterance as well as the form and content of the utterance originates from the situation to which the utterance is a response (Bitzer 1968/1992: 5-6). "Not the rhetor and not the persuasive intent, but the situation is the source and ground of rhetorical activity – and, I should add, of rhetorical criticism" (Bitzer 1992: 6). The rhetorical situation according to Bitzer consists of three elements: the first element, the *exigence*, is the reason why the speaker must speak, the problem which the utterance attempts to resolve. The second element is the *audience* who does not consist of all potential listeners, but only those who can be influenced by the discourse and can mediate the actions desired by the speaker. The third and final element is the *constraints*, which are all such things that can influence the outcome of the utterance. Constraints is a label covering a large number of different factors, which vary a lot from situation to situation and consist of both elements that are internal to the speech and elements that cannot be influenced by the speaker (Bitzer 1992: 6-7). Constraints may be the audience's prior knowledge and opinion of the subject and of the speaker, other speakers' utterances on the matter, the exact time and location in which the speech is delivered, the stylistic and argumentative choices made by the speaker, etc.

Understanding the rhetorical situation as the starting point for rhetorical practice, entails a view on rhetoric that is both functionalistic, the utterance solves a problem raised by the situation, and deterministic, the situation dictates what sort of utterance can solve the problem. While the pragmatic aspect of Bitzer's view on rhetoric is often applauded, his theory has been criticised thoroughly for its deterministic tendencies. This criticism has been levelled most squarely by Richard E. Vatz who turns the concept of the rhetorical situation on its head by stating that: "I would not say that 'rhetoric is situational,' but that situations are rhetorical" (Vatz 1973: 159). Vatz' claim is that rhetoric is not a reaction to situational demands, but an activity, which is genuinely constitutive of meaning. In Vatz' opinion, rhetoric does not mirror reality, but on the contrary

plays a decisive role in creating the human understanding of it. The speaker selects which situational elements should be attributed what significance, thus bringing order and understanding to the elements that are seen as being arbitrary and meaningless before the rhetorical treatment of them. “Rhetoric is a *cause* not an *effect* of meaning. It is antecedent, not subsequent, to a situation’s impact” (Vatz 1973: 160).

3. The dual perspective of the common place

I believe that the controversy over whether rhetoric is situational or situations are rhetorical can be illuminated through the two different metaphorical understandings of topics, which have been suggested by William L. Nothstine. Nothstine suggests that topics, the *topoi* or *loci communes* of classical rhetoric, can be understood as either “… a ‘place’ where an objectively-present line of argument, idea, or memory may be found, quite independent of any subjective intention toward it” (Nothstine 1988: 154), or “the ‘place’ metaphor may refer to a position affording a particular point of view, a perspective, from which one regards one’s world” (Nothstine 1988: 155). Since Bitzer claims that all the elements of the utterance are materially available to the speaker prior to the formulation of the utterance, his conception of the rhetorical situation is in line with the understanding of topoi as being ‘out there,’ materially present to the speaker. Bitzer also fits this understanding of the topoi by claiming that the arguments used and positions taken by the speaker can be evaluated as being objectively right or wrong. Bitzer does not think that the speaker chooses randomly between the available means, rather the circumstances exert a demand on the speaker to address certain issues and present his or her views in certain ways. The speaker’s task, according to Bitzer, is to perceive correctly what the most fitting response to the situation would be: “one might say metaphorically that every situation prescribes its fitting response; the rhetor may or may not read the prescription accurately” (Bitzer 1992: 10). The arguments already exist; it is a matter of finding the right ones.

Contrarily, Vatz sees the rhetorical utterance as the creation of meaning, as the construction of argument or the establishment of a perspective, thus aligning himself with the understanding of topoi as perspectives, as ways to view the world. However, there is one major difference between Vatz’ notion and the implications of the second interpretation of the place metaphor. Vatz stresses the rhetor’s freedom to create meaning, to decide which elements should be given

significance, and what sense should be made, that is to construct the perspective of the utterance (Vatz 1973: 158). However, Nothstine emphasises that the utterance not only presents a perspective, but is also constituted from a particular point of view: "… a topos is a stance one takes that allows certain things to be seen while necessarily causing others to disappear from sight" (Nothstine 1988: 157).

In both interpretations of the 'place' metaphor, situatedness is central to the creation of the rhetorical utterance. But whereas the first interpretation points outwards to the rhetorical situation as conceived by Bitzer, the second interpretation points inwards toward the hermeneutical situation of the speaker. The concept of the hermeneutical situation**[ii]** is used to designate the broad context of possibilities and limitations that human comprehension is always situated within and that facilitate both the comprehension and its articulation (Hyde & Smith 1979/1998: 69). In the understanding advocated by Hyde and Smith and followed by Nothstine in his second interpretation of the place metaphor, the central situational theme of rhetoric is no longer a matter of adapting utterances to features of the objectively existing outside world. Rhetoric is now situational in so far as the possibilities of creating meaning in the world, of revealing the speaker's understanding and opinion, are always set within the horizon of that speaker's hermeneutical situation. Although Hyde and Smith stress the pre-set boundaries of the speaker's horizon of understanding, they also recognise Vatz' notion that rhetoric represents the possibility of choice: "If the hermeneutical situation is the 'reservoir' of meaning, *then rhetoric is the selecting tool for making-known this meaning*" (Hyde & Smith 1998: 71).

The three different notions of how meaning is brought into the rhetorical utterance, which have emerged from this comparison of Vatz' and Bitzer's opinions with Nothstine's exploration of the different possible interpretations of the place metaphor are not incompatible. On the contrary, they can be combined to create a fuller understanding of the sense-making and persuasive rhetorical activity. From the options that are available within the speaker's hermeneutical situation, he or she chooses the themes, lines of argument and stylistic strategies that seem best suited to the task of convincing the audience of the correctness and goodness of the meaning the speaker constructs.

4. Implications for rhetorical criticism

The revised understanding of the rhetorical situation influences the conceptualisation of all three situational elements. However, I will focus on the

impact the dual theoretical perspective has on the *constraints***[iii]**. The understanding of constraints, which guides the present study, is that they both represent the possibility of and the limits on the utterance. Constraints arise from the specific circumstances of the utterance and from the broader background, which includes the speaker's horizon of understanding and the discursive field**[iv]** that he or she enters into dialogue with. The particular meaning of the utterance is constituted through the intricate relationship between the specific and broad limitations and possibilities, which in a sense are present prior to the statement, but only emerge in and through their articulation.

The focus of the type of rhetorical criticism, which is informed by the dual theoretical perspective of rhetorical and hermeneutical choices and limitations, is the utterance itself. However, the reading of the text aims at understanding how the speaker creates meaning in and of the specific and broad contextual settings. I understand the comparative approach as a means of bringing both context and intertext into the textual study. The utterances that I have singled out for analysis, are part of the same discursive context, the debate on the future of the EU, but are uttered by speakers with significantly different political and cultural backgrounds, Spanish and British. The comparison of the two texts will both facilitate the exploration of arguments and topics that are common to the debate and the discovery of differences that may be explained through reference to the speaker's different points of entrance into the debate.

5. Exigence

The speech by the Spanish Prime Minister, José María Aznar, was held on the 26th of September 2000 at the French Institute of Foreign Relations, and British PM, Tony Blair, spoke at the Polish stock exchange on the 6th of October 2000. The speeches are part of a wave of major policy statements given by heads of state or other leading politicians that swept over Europe after Joschka Fischer, German Foreign Minister, on the 12th of May 2000 presented his vision of Europe's future at the Humboldt University in Berlin. In his speech, Fischer repeatedly stated that he was expressing his personal views, not those of the German government. However, no one was in doubt of the significance of Fischer's initiative, and soon all the leaders of Europe went in search of an appropriate podium from which to express their views on what would be the most desirable development of the EU.

The statements by Fischer, Aznar, Blair and the other European leaders shared

the general exigence of getting the debate on the future of the EU under way. Although Blair and Aznar speak as the official representatives of their countries and present their opinions on the different points of dispute in the guise of national visions on the EU, these two particular statements cannot in themselves influence the eventual outcome of the debate directly. Rather than being attempts at cutting the debate short, the speeches by Aznar and Blair should be seen as presentations of the matters of dispute and the different opinions on these matters, and thus they are powerful statements of the agenda of the debate. Once the leaders of the EU member states have come to terms with what sorts of discussions are needed, which matters are to be decided and which alternative stances are available, it is very hard for anyone else to change that agenda.

When the speeches are placed within the duality of the found and the constructed exigence, two tendencies emerge. Blair and Aznar on the one hand both respond to an already existing expectation that they should present their opinions, thereby positioning themselves and their nations in the emerging debate on the future of the EU. On the other hand, they also contribute to the construction of the common understanding of the exigence. The speeches take a number of issues for granted; issues that in principle could be doubted, but are now constructed as really existing exigencies. The commonly perceived exigence holds two premises: the EU is in need of reform, and extensive debate is the means of ensuring that the changes eventually made will be the most appropriate.

6. Audience

The immediate audiences of the two speeches, the people physically present when the speeches were delivered, can hardly be seen as audiences in the strict sense that Bitzer uses the term. Aznar addresses himself to a primarily academic assembly, while the people attending Blair's speech are representatives of the Central European countries applying for membership of the EU. Neither audience has the competency to decide on the matters discussed by the speakers, but given that it is not the purpose of the speeches to put an end to the discussion, that may not be a problem. In fact, the immediate context of the speeches may serve primarily as a platform for making the speakers' views known to a larger audience and for influencing the ongoing debate on the future of the EU. And the immediate audience may be seen as a necessary framing for the speech, whereas the possibility of inducing change lies with the broader public and political circles that constitute the debate and will eventually decide on the contested issues.

The broader audience can only be reached indirectly through the mediation of the speech and of the speaker's viewpoints, and the choice of the specific speech situation is not unimportant to the chances of having the speech broadly publicised. Speaking to a primarily academic assembly like the one chosen by Aznar, may signal a willingness to present points of view openly and to discuss them freely that will be appreciated by some members of the larger audience. But the academic setting is not very unusual, and it does not attract much attention outside of the tight circles of scholars and politicians dealing professionally with the EU. The specific situation chosen by Aznar does not present a very powerful springboard into the larger circles of popular debate. The setting chosen by Blair is more complicated than Aznar's and more attention has to be paid to the interests and opinions of the immediate audience. However, the more unique and more politically binding setting may help draw more attention to the speech in larger circles, and the speech has the chance of making a larger impact on the ongoing debate.

7. Constraints

The constraints will be treated in two turns: first, I focus on the speakers' use of and reference to the broader context of the debate on the EU. These elements I understand as the 'places' where the speaker may go to find his arguments, the limits and possibilities surrounding the speaker. Secondly, I turn to the backgrounds of the two speakers in order to analyse how the relationship between their respective nations and the EU is constructed. Here I find both indications of how the speakers make known their own positions, and of how their understanding is limited by those positions.

8. Common places of the debate on the future of the EU

The speeches display many similarities in the topics discussed and the mode of discussion. This overlap points to the existence of a broader consensus about the nature of the debate on the future of the EU, and both speakers display high levels of acceptance of the existing terms and topics for discussion; they reproduce the established agenda of the debate. The major items on the list of common themes and conceptualisations are: enlargement, the need for institutional reforms, the possibility of a constitution for the EU, qualified majority voting as a means of making decisions, enhanced cooperation as a way in which some states can proceed with developments entailing further integration without the unanimous acceptance of all member states and the question of how the

people's support for the European project is ensured.
Although there are differences of opinion, which is only to be expected of two different contributions to the same debate, the overall impression of the two speeches is very similar. The almost perfect agreement about what should be on the agenda contributes greatly to this impression, but also the similar way in which many of the themes are treated, is of great importance. For example enlargement is a central theme to both speakers, and is in each case conceived as an opportunity rather than a problem**[v]**. Also, both speakers see enlargement as a matter of dual commitment by the current member states and the applying countries**[vi]**. Finally, the speakers agree that the enlargement is half of the reason why reform is needed, and they also share the other half of the explanation: the EU is taking on more and more tasks which have hitherto been reserved for the nation state. All in all both speakers see the simultaneous deepening and widening of the EU as the major reason for the necessity of reform and as the basic framework for the discussion of possible reforms**[vii]**.

It is not only through the equal treatment of similar topics that the two speakers' use common points of reference drawn from the context of the debate on the future of the EU. The speakers also make explicit reference to the viewpoints of other political leaders. Curiously, both speakers choose to quote other national leaders on the same matter, namely enhanced cooperation, and they choose to quote different leaders, but to the same effect. Aznar declares himself to be in agreement with the French President, Jacques Chirac, who "insists on the necessity of understanding enhanced cooperation as a factor of integration and not of segregation**[viii]**." Blair refers to the Belgian Prime Minister on the matter and states: "I agree with Guy Verhofstadt that enhanced cooperation is an instrument to strengthen the Union from within, not an instrument of exclusion." This high level of overlap suggests that the two speakers have common understandings not only of what should be discussed, but also of how the given themes should be conceived and articulated. However, one can raise the question of how deep the unanimity is. This question has several layers, the first of which concerns direct disagreement between the speakers: on what matters do they explicitly disagree? What are the causes for disagreement? The second layer involves the possibility of unperceived or unmentioned disagreements: do the two speakers have the same understandings of the shared concepts? Or might they use the same concepts to create different meanings?

9. Speakers' perspectives

In order to answer the questions raised in the previous section, I will first present the speakers' constructions of the relationship between the member states, their own in particular, and the EU. Taking these constructions as markers of the speakers' perspective on the EU, of the places from where they look at the different issues of the debate, I shall then investigate each speaker's understanding and evaluation of some central concepts and study the meaning created through the use of these concepts.

Although both speakers conceive of the relationship between the member states and the EU as a careful balance between national and common interests**[ix]**, they place their emphasis on opposite sides of the national-European scale. One of Blair's major concerns is "…how we stop Europe focussing on things that it doesn't need to do, the interfering part of Europe that antagonises even Europe's most ardent supporters." In contrast to this Aznar states that "on their part, the member states should be ready to accommodate their national interests…to the common interest of the Union. It is true that this process of reciprocal accommodation supposes denouncements on the part of the member states; but this should not be seen simply as a loss or a turnover, but as the common take-over of what before was done unilaterally and solely…**[x]**"

The different concerns, which the two speakers display, arise from fundamentally different accounts of the democratic flows between the EU and the nation. Blair understands democratic impulses to be stemming from each member state: "The truth is, the primary sources of democratic accountability in Europe are the directly elected and representative institutions of the nations of Europe – national parliaments and governments. That is not to say Europe will not in future generations develop its own strong demos or polity, but it hasn't yet." Aznar, on the contrary, indicates that the EU is a means of democratising the member states: "My country is, naturally, open and pluralistic. The Constitution of 1978 meant the release of an unused potential that we guarded within; but how far wouldn't we be from this image of Spain without the spur of European integration during these last years, which attracts us as much now as in the first day of entry into the Community**[xi].**"

In Aznar's statement, there is an indication of how his own national perspective influences his understanding of the general relationship between the EU and its member states. With the constitution of 1978, which Aznar refers to, Spain emerged from the dictatorship of Franco and in 1986 the country entered the EU

as a fully reconstituted democratic state. Thus, Spain has recently undergone the kind of transition that the applicant states are experiencing at the moment, and Aznar explicitly connects the Spanish situation to the enlargement process: "…my government hopes that the enlargement will become reality as soon as possible. It could not wish anything else for Spain, which has seen a long economic transition and a happy political transition**[xii].**" Spain has benefited greatly from its membership of the EU, but Aznar is careful to explain that the benefits are mutual and do not come without responsibility: "Being Spanish, I say to you that the European idea is not a springboard for strictly national projects, nor is it an insurance of stability for the weakest countries, but an in-grown desire of belonging**[xiii]**." In sum, Aznar sees the EU as having a democratising effect on its members. He understands the national interests of Spain as being closely entwined with the common interests of Europe, and he identifies the Spanish perspective with that of Europe as such. This last point is emphasised by the historical note on which Aznar ends his account of the Spanish entrance into the EU: "in reality we did not enter Europe because from here we had never gone out. Spain is one of the few countries on the continent that has wished and for centuries has demonstrated that it was European when entering into contact with other civilisations**[xiv].**"

Blair also presents the particular British relationship to the EU historically, but unlike Aznar's his account is a critical one. In fact, the historic section of Blair's speech is a revision of the historical relationship between Britain and the EU and a vigorous attempt at redefining that relationship. Blair begins his account by stating that "the blunt truth is that British policy towards the rest of Europe over half a century has been marked by gross misjudgements, mistaking what we wanted to be the case with what was the case." Britain was too slow in leaving its position as "benign, avuncular friend," and did not understand the developments that ultimately led to the formation of the EU, as we know it today. "At each stage, Britain thought it won't possibly happen and held back. And at each stage it did happen and we were faced with the choice: catching up or staying out." Blair concludes his historical review with the assertion that, whatever the legacy of the past, today there are no reasons why Britain should opt out of Europe, and no reasons why Europe should not want Britain at its centre: "Britain's future is and will be as a leading partner in Europe."
The redefinition of the hesitant British attitude has two sides to it: on the one hand Blair seeks to stamp the sceptical and reluctant British attitude toward the

Union as historically outdated. On the other hand, he knows that the British resistance to the European project is still very much alive and kicking. Therefore, he tries to appease the concerned Britons by promising that the EU Britain will be a leading partner of, will be different from the EU that Britain was sceptical of. "The problem Europe's citizens have with Europe arises when Europe's priorities aren't theirs. No amount of institutional change – most of which passes them by completely – will change that. Reforming Europe to give it direction and momentum around the people's priorities will. The citizens of Europe must feel that they own Europe, not that Europe owns them." The perspective Blair seeks to construct is one, which is guided by Britain's past experiences and the continued lack of support from the British people. Blair places Britain at the centre of a European project that develops according to the direction of the people's priorities, and such a development not only involves further integration, but also careful limitation of the assignments and the power given to the EU.

10. Construction of meaning

Having established the different perspectives from which the speakers view the possible future developments of the EU, I shall return to the question of whether the two speakers may be creating different meanings using the same expressions. I shall elaborate on only two examples: the catalogue of competencies and enhanced cooperation. The catalogue of competencies is the one proposal for reform on which the two speakers are in overt disagreement. Blair is in favour of the idea of drawing up '…a statement of the principles according to which we should decide what is best done at the European level and what should be done at the national level." Aznar, however, thinks the concept is both limited and limiting: "Being Spanish, I believe that instead of the geometric division of competencies we have to deepen the notion of shared enactment of the competencies. The creation of sealed compartments should not be furthered, but we should favour the common use of forces on different levels toward a common objective**[xv].**" From Aznar's perspective the interests of the nations are equal to those of the EU, and the only concern is how the common problems are solved most effectively. Therefore, he does not see any benefits in fixing boundaries on the EU's scope of action, but would rather that the exact combination of competencies be worked out from case to case. To Blair such a solution would be unacceptable, since he and his electorate need a guarantee that the EU will not end up participating in all decisions; Blair needs the boundaries, which a catalogue of competencies would afford.

Whereas there is explicit difference in the two speakers' judgement of the catalogue of competencies, their use of 'enhanced cooperation' shows great overlap. Yet their common phrasing reveals a potential for different understandings, which I shall seek to illuminate. Aznar explains enhanced cooperation as "an instrument with which a group of pioneer countries go forward in the construction of a more united Europe, pointing the way to others and encouraging them to walk it by their side. Using biological terms, one could say that the member states who put forward an enhanced cooperation would be precursors whose combination and common force would result in a more elaborate and wider reality**[xvi]**." And he concludes the explanation by stating that "in this sense, Spain wishes to be one of the precursors on this new road**[xvii]**." Aznar is aware that enhanced cooperation may cause some problems, and particularly he points to the risk that various centres could be formed, turning Europe into a jigsaw puzzle and allowing each member state to pick and choose from a 'Europe à la carte.' This development must be avoided: "we have to guarantee the common stem and avoid the birth of various Europes**[xviii].**" In his examination of enhanced cooperation Blair says: "I have no problem with greater flexibility or groups of member states going forward together. But that must not lead to a hard core; a Europe in which some Member States create their own set of shared policies and institutions from which others are in practice excluded. Such groups must at every stage be open to others who wish to join."

Two differences in the speakers' treatments of enhanced cooperation immediately arise. First, Blair's acceptance of the method is somewhat lukewarm, he has no problem with it, whereas Aznar accepts it fully. Second, Aznar explicitly commits Spain to participating in enhanced cooperation; Blair does no such thing. In fact, Blair's whole description of enhanced cooperation displays an attitude of non-participation. He envisions the groups of member states as going forward from the stable centre of the EU, which Britain inhabits, and this perspective explains why he sees the risk of enhanced cooperation in the formation of a hard core. Although Blair has redefined Britain's role in the EU and set the British nation at the centre of the European project, Britain cannot participate in enhanced cooperation, and the nation therefore risks being marginalised once more. Whereas Blair views the developments from the centre, Aznar's perspective is that of a precursor moving forward into new territory and clearing the way for others. Being sure that Spain will participate at the forefront of European development, Aznar's concern is not with the formation of a hard core, but with

the risk that different precursors might move in different directions. Such a development would be harmful to the ever more tightly integrated EU that is the goal of Aznar, but it would be suitable to the ambitions of Blair. To Blair different initiatives of enhanced cooperation with diverging tendencies would be an assurance that Britain was still at the centre of development, whereas the unanimous move towards more integration by a large group of member states would place Britain outside a new centre of gravity.

The examination of the relationship between the common places of the debate on the EU's future and the particular perspectives of Tony Blair and José María Aznar has shown that the two speakers do not necessarily mean the same things when they use similar phrases. Even though they speak of enhanced cooperation in almost the same terms, there are unperceived differences of meaning. Blair and Aznar view the phenomenon from opposite perspectives, and that leads them to different understandings of the potentials and risks entailed by the concept.

11. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the speeches by the Spanish and the British Prime Ministers illustrates the strength of the dual theoretical perspective, which was presented at the beginning of this paper. By taking the proposed theoretical stance, nuances of meaning, which would otherwise be hidden, are brought forth and can be explained. The comparative analysis of two texts, which speak into the same context, but from different backgrounds and perspectives, is a useful tool in constructing the dual analytical perspective needed to gain the novel insights into the meaning of both texts. Yet, further discussion of the method and its theoretical base is necessary in order to secure and strengthen the explanatory potential and theoretical consistency of the method. One issue, which must be resolved, is the method's position in the debate between proponents of close reading (i.e. Michael Leff) and of critical rhetoric (Ray McKerrow, Calvin McGee). Should rhetorical criticism focus primarily on the finished utterance, the product, or on the societal process, which shapes it (Gaonkar 1990: 291)? Is the utterance a whole in itself, which must be studied in its intentional dimension, or is it a fragment, a part of an ideograph, to be investigated extensionally (Leff 1992: 223-224)? My hope is that these seemingly contradictory alternatives can be brought together under the dual understanding of the topical metaphor, thus bringing another productive field of tension into the multiperspectival analytical method. The further development of this notion falls outside the range of this paper, but serves to show the direction, which the theoretical dimension of the

study might take.

Turning to the substantial side of the study, the analysis has presented insights into the two speeches that have implications for the understanding of the debate on the future of the European Union as such. José María Aznar and Tony Blair use the same concepts to refer to the same issues and generally have similar perceptions of the agenda of the debate on the EU's future. However, the scrutiny of their utterances from the dual perspective of internal and external limitations and possibilities has revealed that the two speakers use the issues and concepts to create different meanings. Such illumination of different perspectives, understandings and meanings, which might go unnoticed because they are presented under common labels, is essential to understanding the debate and securing its success. If the debate is to result in a consensus that can be followed through in practice, that consensus must be enacted as a common creation of meaning. If the underlying disagreements are not perceived and discussed in a genuine attempt to establish common horizons of understanding between the participants of the debate, the risk is that the common decisions will be interpreted and implemented differently in each country. The actually existing differences of understanding would in any case show themselves in the implementation, but by then it would be too late, and the EU would have lost the chance of using the reforms to increase its efficiency and legitimacy. If the participants of the European debate use the available strategic options reflexively, carefully examining what each participant means, a genuinely common foundational understanding of the EU may be formed.

NOTES

[i] The composition (members of national and European legislative and executive assemblies), mandate (can make recommendations but has no power to enforce these) and deadline (the Intergovernmental Conference of 2004) of the Convention were all decided at the Council summit of December 2000 (the Laeken Declaration).

[ii] The hermeneutical situation can be split into three elements: 'fore-having', 'fore-sight' and 'fore-conception'. "The fore-having is the realm of linguistic possibilities that a culture makes available to its members 'in advance' of any particular act of interpretation that may be performed by any member of the culture […] The fore-sight is an abstraction of the fore-having; it originates when members of a culture appropriate the culture's fore-having and, in so doing,

formulate specific 'points of view' which guide the interpretation of a certain object […] The fore-conception is the way by which one structures the linguistic possibilities of one's fore-sight 'in advance' of an act of interpretation" (Hyde & Smith 1998: 69).

[iii] As pointed out by Carolyn R. Miller, the revised understanding also has large consequences for the definition of exigence as a demand existing prior to the utterance and to which the speaker reacts. Following Kenneth Burke, Miller sees rhetorical utterances as actions with a process of interpretation at their centres. The exigence motivating a rhetorical statement is not perceived, but defined (Miller 1984: 155-156). This definition of exigence is, however, always set within an interpretative context, and it is this context that I wish to draw the attention to by focusing on the constraints rather than the exigence.

[iv] I here use 'discursive field', a term whose foucauldian roots should not be neglected, in a loose sense, meaning a group of utterances that share thematic and stylistic features. For the present purposes the discursive field is taken to be the debate on the future of the EU as such, but in a more comprehensive and detailed study that field would have to be subdivided into many partially distinct, but closely related smaller entities.

[v] Aznar: "Para mí, la ampliación es más una oportunidad que un problema." ("To me, the enlargement is more an opportunity than a problem"). All translations of Aznar's speech are my own and for the purpose of understanding only; the analysis is based on the original Spanish text.

Blair: "Enlargement to the East may be EU's greatest challenge, but I also believe it is its greatest opportunity."

[vi] Aznar: "…creo que el 2003 puede ser el ano que dé paso a los vecinos más avanzados, y con esa perspectiva creo que debemos todos, Estados miembros actuales y candidatos, hacer los esfuerzos necesarios para estar en condiciones de dar ese primer paso hacia la reunificación del continente." ("I think that 2003 could be the year that gives passage to the most advanced neighbours, and with this perspective I think that we all, actual Member States and applicants, should make the necessary efforts to be ready to take this first step towards the reunification of the continent").

Blair: "I will be urging Europe's political leaders to commit themselves to a specific framework leading to an early end of the negotiations and to accession." "My message to you is this: there are of course no guaranteed places. Reform is the only entry ticket."

[vii] Aznar: "…me detendré algo más en la cuestión en la que algunos cifran

todas sus esperanzas para resolver el dilema profundización-ampliación…" ("…I will detain may self somewhat longer at the question in which some place all there hopes of solving the dilemma of deepening-widening…")
Blair: "The most important challenge to Europe is to wake up to the new reality: Europe is widening and deepening simultaneously. There will be more of us in the future, trying to do more. The issue is: not whether we do this, but how we reform this new Europe so that it both delivers real benefits to the people of Europe, addressing the priorities they want addressed; and does so in a way that has their consent and support."
[viii] "…insiste en la necesidad de entender las cooperaciones reforzadas como un factor de integración y no de segregación."
[ix] Aznar: "Europa es, para mí, una comunidad atravesada por múltiples trayectorias históricas e intereses confrontados. El gobierno y la administración de la idea europea representan un proceso simultáneo que consiste en apostar por el futuro, consolidando el acervo laboriosamente conseguido" (Europe is, to me, a community crossed by multiple historical roads and conflicting interests. The government and administration of the European idea represent a simultaneous process, which consists of being on guard for the future, consolidating the cultural inheritance laboriously obtained).
Blair: "Europe is a Europe of free, independent sovereign nations who choose to pool that sovereignty in pursuit of their own interests and the common good, achieving more together than we can achieve alone. The EU will remain a unique combination of the intergovernmental and the supranational"
[x] "Por su parte, los Estados miembros deben estar dispuestos a acomodar sus intereses nacionales…al interés común de la Unión. Es cierto que este proceso de acomodo recíproco supone renuncias por parte de los estados miembros; pero esto no debe interpretarse como una pérdida o una cesión sin más, sino como la asunción en común de lo que antes se ejercía unilateralmente e incluso…"
[xi] "Mi país es, naturalmente, abierto y plural. La Constitución de 1978 significó la liberación de un potencial desusado que guardábamos en nuestro interior; pero qué lejos estaríamos de esta imagen de Espana sin el acicate de la integración europea durante estos últimos anos, que nos atrae siempre como el primer día del ingreso en la Comunidad."
[xii] "…mi Gobierno pretende que la ampliación se haga realidad lo antes posible. No podría desear otra cosa para Espana, que ha conocido una larga transición económica y una feliz transición política."
[xiii] "Como espanol. Les digo que la idea europea no es un trampolín para

proyectos estrictamente nacionales, ni un seguro de estabilidad para los miembros más débiles, sino una voluntad inveterada de pertenencia."

[xiv] "En realidad, no entrábamos en Europa porque de aquí nunca habíamos salido. Espana es de los pocos países en el continente que ha deseado y demostrado durante siglos que era europeo al entrar en contacto con otras civilizaciones.."

[xv] "Como espanol, creo que, más que la división geométrica de competencias, hay que profundizar en la noción del ejercicio compartido de las competencias. No debe fomentarse la creación de compartimentos estancos, sino favorecer la puesta en común de esfuerzos a diferentes niveles en pro de un objetivo común."

[xvi] "…un intrumento mediante el cual un grupo de países pioneros avanzan en la construcción de una Europa más unida, senalando el camino a otros y animándoles así a emprenderlo a su lado. Por utilizar términos de la biología, se podría decir que los Estados miembros que lancen una cooperación reforzada serían precursores cuya combinación y esfuerzo común desembocaría en una realidad más elaborada y más amplia."

[xvii] "En ese sentido, Espana desea ser uno de los precursores de esa nueva vía."

[xviii] "Tenemos que garantizar el tronco común y evitar el nacimiento de varias Europas."

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Metadialogues

1. Introduction

A metadialogue is a dialogue about a dialogue or about some dialogues. A dialogue that is not a metadialogue will be called a ground level dialogue. For instance, let the ground level dialogue be an argumentative discussion aiming at the resolution of some dispute. Then disagreement about the correctness of some move in this dialogue will constitute another dispute which the parties again may try to resolve by dialogue. This dialogue will then be a metadialogue relative to the first dialogue. It will be about this first dialogue and perhaps some related dialogues. Also, its primary purpose is to help this first dialogue achieve its end: in this sense the metadialogue will be embedded in the ground level dialogue.

Three problems arise, given this concept of metadialogue:
1. A demarcation problem. Some critical moves seem plainly to belong to the ground level. For instance, a critic's asking for argumentative support within a context of critical discussion, though in some sense being about the preceding dialogue, would not be analysed as a move that starts a metadialogue. At least it would be very much strained to do so. Many moves on the ground level can be looked upon as asking for, or installing, conversational repairs, but are not, usually, for that reason classified at the metalevel. On the other hand a dispute about the allotment of speaking time would be so classified. Criticism of fallacies seems to lie somewhere in between. Where to draw the line?
2. A problem of infinite regress. If from any critical discussion one can move up (or down, whatever metaphor you prefer) to a metadialogue that constitutes another critical discussion, this may launch us into an infinite regress. A discussion about the rules of ground level dialogue may open up a discussion about the rules governing discussions about ground level rules, and so on. Can this regress be blocked?
3. An equity problem. Some retreats into metadialogue seem quite reasonable and bound to help the ground level dialogue proceed. In other cases one is confronted with nit-picking or completely unwarranted charges. On the one hand each party should have a right to contest the correctness of any ground level move, on the other hand its adversary should not be left without means of defense. Can we strike a balance?

There are other questions besides these problems, such as whether the metadialogues of a persuasion dialogue (critical discussion) must always themselves be of the type of a persuasion dialogue. Could they sometimes be of some other type, say negotiation? Further there is the question of how to formulate rules that regulate the opening and closing of metadialogues and the effect of these dialogues on commitment stores. These questions can be raised both from a descriptive and from a normative point of view.
The purpose of this paper is to explore these problems and questions. Definite solutions will not be reached. Let us first look at some examples.

2. Examples
People from all generations complain about the deterioration of something. Aristotle is no exception. In former times it was still easy to make one's adversary admit some false or paradoxical proposition. One had just to ask a lot of questions

and insist that one's interlocutor speak his mind, then sooner or later he would be led to falsehood or paradox. "This unfair method, however, is [nowadays] much less practicable than formerly; for people demand, 'What has this to do with the original question?'" (Aristotle, 1965, 69, De Soph. El. 12, 172b19-21). Thus, by their critical attitude, so Aristotle seems to complain, people spoil the questioning: they retreat into metadialogue. The case is of course also known from cross-examination in court. "Where do all these questions lead to?". "A moment, Your Honor, and it will become clear how relevant these questions are." Here the judge is to decide upon the metaquestion. In other cases some dialogue about how much time is allowed for further questioning may be needed. This will often be a negotiation dialogue.

Metadialogue was not new in Aristotle's time. In Plato's Euthydemus we find the following example:
[*Socrates (first-person narrator) just asked a question. Dionysodorus sees refutation looming and tries to avoid giving an answer.*]
[Dionysodorus:] … Just answer me.
Before *you* anwer *me*? I said.
Won't you answer? he said.
Is that fair?
Quite fair, he said.

On what reasoning? said I. Is not this your reasoning – that you visit us as one all-wise about words, and you know when you are bound to answer and when not, and now you will not answer anything since you perceive that you are not bound?
You just chatter, he said, without troubling to answer. Come, my good man, do as I say and answer, since you yourself admit that I am wise.
Then I must do as you say, said I, and I can't help it, as it seems, for you are master. Ask away.
(Plato, 1961, 401, *Euthydemus* 287c-d)

In this passage the discussants suspend their discussion to start a metadiscussion about roles: who is to be the Questioner, who the Answerer? We see that that Socrates, ironically, hands out an argument to Dionysodorus to support his claim on being the Questioner. The whole metadialogue is a kind of mock persuasion dialogue. At the end, Socrates agrees to be the Answerer, thus giving in to a most unfair swap of roles. For us it is important to note the possibility that a discussion may give occasion to a metadialogue on the division of roles.

Another Socratic dialogue provides a more extended example of metadialogue. I refer to Protagoras 334c-338e, a passage too long to quote in its entirety. The situation is that Protagoras has just been trying to escape from his role as an Answerer by delivering a (rather short) speech on another subject. The speech is much applauded by the audience. But Socrates complains that he cannot follow long speeches:

… I said, 'Protagoras, I happen to be a forgetful sort of person, and if someone speaks to me at length, I forget what he is talking about. It's just as if I were a trifle deaf; in that case you would think it right to speak louder than usual, if you were going to talk to me. So now, since you are dealing with someone with a bad memory, cut your answers short and make them briefer, if I am to follow you.

'What do you mean by telling me to give short answers?' he asked. 'Are they to be shorter than the questions require?'

'By no means,' I said.

'The right length, then?'

'Yes.'

'So are they to be the length that I think right, or that you do?'

(Plato, 1991, 27-28, *Protagoras* 334c-e)

Here we are launched into a metadialogue that starts as a kind of persuasion dialogue. But its continuation in the *Protagoras* no longer (primarily) displays the features of a persuasion dialogue. Rather the discussants resort to negotiation. Socrates threatens to leave the scene and thus to end the dialogue, typically a move that can be part of a negotiation but not of a persuasion dialogue. The end of dialogue is, however, averted by the introduction of a number of proposals about how to continue. The first proposal, made by Callias is that each of the discussants will speak as he likes. But according to Alcibiades this is not fair. since Socrates grants that Protagoras is better at giving a speech. So if Protagoras wants to dispute the superiority of Socrates in question and answer dialogue he should enter a contest in that type of dialogue. This is the second proposal. Then Critias, Prodicus, and Hippias try to steer a middle course. This leads to a third proposal, by Hippias, to appoint an umpire to see to it that contributions to the dialogue will not be too long, nor unduly constrained by requirements of brevity. However, Socrates argues that it would be improper to appoint an umpire (since no one is wiser than Protagoras). He modifies the third proposal into a fourth proposal, which is then accepted: both parties will fulfill alternately the roles of Questioner and of Answerer; Protagoras will be the first

Questioner; the audience as a whole will act as an umpire; if Protagoras in his answer does not stick to the question, Socrates and the audience will ask him 'not to ruin the conversation'.
This is a clear example where the metadialogue that is resorted to in order to solve problems in the ground level dialogue is a negotiation dialogue, even though it contains pieces of arguing that can be considered as embedded persuasion dialogues.

For a contemporary example I refer to the recent conference of the International Whaling Committee (ICW) at Shimonosheki, Japan. According to a newspaper report (NRC-Handelsblad, May 25th, 2002) this conference was completely blocked by the extreme opposition between those in favor of some controlled whaling (the so-called Revised Management Scheme, or RMS) and those opposing all whaling. Iceland had left the IWC in the early nineties because the RMS-plans were not making progress. Its status had been reduced to that of an observer. But now Iceland wanted to return to full membership, seeing some chance for controlled whaling to become an option in the near future. However, Iceland announced that if controlled whaling were not be installed within due time, it would renounce commitment to the current IWC ban on whaling. For the IWC this reservation was a reason to refuse full membership to Iceland. Clearly the IWC was now moving on a metalevel with respect to the ground level discussion on whaling which, one presumes, was their principal concern. They were debating whether Iceland could be admitted to join the ground level discussion. Iceland's reservation was used as an argument that it could not. Norway objected, arguing that the IWC's refusal to admit Iceland was illegal. A vote was impending in which Iceland could have won the case. But the chairman refused to have a vote. Japan's representative tried to intervene: "Please hear me out!" he yelled. "No" hollered the Americans. "Yes" shouted the Japanese. But it was No. Exit Iceland.
This last phase could be described as a metametadiscussion, a metadiscussion about how to go about the metadiscussion about Iceland's admission. It is a discussion of the eristic type, consisting chiefly of yells and shouts.

3. Research
As far as I know, metadialogue has been studied very little by theorists of argumentation. One of the main sources is Hamblin's 9th chapter of *Fallacies* (1970). In that chapter Hamblin distinguishes between topic points and points of order. Topic points, we could say, belong to the ground level dialogue, whereas

points of order introduce metadialogues. His idea is that charges of equivocation should be looked upon as points of order:

The road to an understanding of equivocation, then, is the understanding of *charges* of equivocation. For this, the development of a theory of charges, objections or points of order is a first essential. (Hamblin, 1970, 303)

Mackenzie (1979, 1981) introduced the idea of points of order into formal dialectic. He introduces dialectic systems consisting of an inner and an outer system. Dialogues that are legal according to the inner system are called *legal*. They constitute a subset of the dialogues that are legal according to the outer system; these are *legal*+. As soon as some move turns a dialogue into one that is merely *legal*+, and not legal, the other party, in order to stay *legal*+, has to react by what we would now call a charge of fallacy. The illegal move is then removed and inner legality restored. There are no debates about the inner legality of moves. These contributions of Mackenzie are essential for the description of many-levelled systems, but they do not yet provide for full-fledged metadialogue.

Finocchiaro (1980, Ch. 16) distinguished between meta-arguments (arguments about arguments) and object arguments (which they are about). This distinction is certainly relevant for the study of metadialogue, and so is the material adduced in that chapter, as well as the notion of active involvement in the preceding chapter. However, it must not be presumed that all meta-arguments must be placed at the metadialogical level. Most of them are perhaps better placed at the ground level. Here things still have to be sorted out: when does the criticism of an argument amount to a claim that discussion rules were transgressed and that the whole argument must be withdrawn, when is it merely meant to lead to an improvement of the argument?

In the pragma-dialectical model of critical discussion the place to discuss the proceedings of the dialogue is the opening stage (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992). In the opening stage (which is not the first stage, but the second, following immediately after the confrontation stage which introduces a dispute about some issue) agreements must be reached about the following:

1. Engaging in dialogue to settle or resolve the dispute.
2. Using persuasion dialogue (to resolve the dispute) rather than some other type of dialogue (to settle it).
3. Adopting a particular dialectic system (specific rules) for the resolution of the dispute.

4. Assigning of roles to participants
5. Appropriate argument schemes and the conditions for their correct application.
6. Starting points that can serve as basic premises.

If a dialogue is conducted about any of these issues, this will then be a metadialogue relative to the ground level dialogue in which the confrontation occurs. Even though there is no official splitting in levels of dialogue, pragma-dialectics confronts the same problems as the theorists of metadialogue. The demarcation problem now resurges as the problem of drawing a line between moves that belong to the argumentation stage (the third stage) and the opening stage. For instance, one may wonder where to place critical questions that seem to be part of the argumentation stage, but may at the same time challenge the correctness of the application of an argumentation scheme. The problem of infinite regress arises if the opening stage is allowed to contain critical discussions that again need an opening stage. There is also an equity problem: how to balance the right each discussant has to return to the opening stage with the right to resist needless digressions? This may be no problem in ideal executions of critical discussion, where no return to the opening stage is required, but it may constitute a problem for less ideal situations.

Of course the same problems play a role in more formal approaches to dialectics. Van Laar in his study of ambiguity and equivocation proposes a model that contains two layers. In an ideal situation where all the so-called regulative rules are followed, no ambiguities occur. In somewhat less ideal situations ambiguities do occur, but are dealt with in a reasonable way, described by the constitutive rules of Ambiguity Dialectics (Van Laar, 2002). Recently Van Laar added a third layer, that of attempts at Ambiguity Dialectics (Van Laar, 2003).
This last moves brings one close to the idea of a Control Layer, which would end the infinite regress. This idea has recently been studied by theorists of multi-agent systems. McBurney and Parsons (2002) present an Agent Dialogue Framework which admits the embedding of dialogues in dialogues. These dialogues may be of various types: persuasion, negotiation, etc. At the top there is a Control Layer which is the level where dialogues about dialogues are conducted. The problem remains of how to control the Control Layer (Not that I have a solution to offer).

4. Dialectic Rules for Metadialogue
Below I shall atttempt to formulate some rules for opening and closing

metadialogues that criticize moves that pretend to be permissible at a lower level. The type of dialogue I have in mind is persuasion dialogue on all levels. It does not matter how many levels there are. The rules are symmetrical, i.e. they do not distinguish between roles. There are two participants that move alternately. In the rules, "*X*" refers to one of the participants (indiscriminately) and "*Y*" to the other. At each stage of the dialogue there is a sequence of performed moves that are supposed by both participants to be legal on the ground level (the accepted grounded level dialogue). When a new allegedly permissible ground level move *m* is added, its permissibility may be challenged and tested on the (first) metalevel. If no test is asked for, the accepted ground level dialogue is extended by move *m* (similarly if the test has a positive result). The empty sequence counts as accepted.

Rule 1 Suppose that *X* has proposed to continue the ground level dialogue with an allegedly permissible ground level move *m* (*m* is a move by *X* that is not a challenge of the permissibility of the preceding move). Then the sequence of alleged (non-retracted) ground level moves that precede m constitutes the accepted ground level dialogue. It is now *Y's* turn to move. One option for *Y* is to challenge the permissibility of move *m*, *X*'s last move. This opens a metadialogue at level 1.

Rule 2 In the dialogue opened according to Rule 1 (henceforward called "the metadialogue") *Y* is the Proponent of the thesis that *X's* last move is not permissible as a continuation of the accepted ground level dialogue; *X* is to act as the Opponent.

Rule 3 In the metadialogue all established agreements about dialectic are among the Opponent's initial concessions.

Rule 4 As soon as *Y* has won the metadialogue, X is to retract the alleged ground level move *m*. *X* may substitute some other (alleged) ground level move for *m*, but not enter a metadialogue on the permissibility of *Y's* preceding move on the ground level. *X* is to pay the costs of the metadialogue.

Rule 5 As soon as *X* has won the metadialogue, move *m* counts as having been tested with positive result. The accepted ground level dialogue is extended by *m*. *Y* is to propose the next move, which must be on the ground level. Also, *Y* is to pay the costs of the metadialogue.

Rule 6 Rules similar to Rule 1 through 5 obtain to regulate transitions to metadialogue at other levels than the ground level.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion of this paper must perhaps be that it is too early for conclusions. Certainly, the proposal in the preceding section does not solve the problems listed in the introduction. For one thing, the proposal is limited to persuasion dialogue, whereas we saw in several examples (Protagoras, IWC) that dialogues of other types have a role to play.

The demarcation problem is left wide open. But perhaps it is an advantage of the present framework that it does not preempt any decisions as to what types of criticism the ground level may contain. These rules can be combined with a ground level that already displays discussion about questions of interpretation, questions of ambiguity, questions of validity, and criticism of applications of argumentation schemes. What is referred to the metalevel could be called "fallacy criticism" (Krabbe, 2002). The term "fallacy" is thus reserved for moves that shouldn't have occurred and are therefore punished with a fine (the costs of metadialogue). Debatable points of meaning, ambiguity, validity, and the critical questioning that goes with the application of argumentation schemes will remain at the ground level, and the errors discussed in this way need not be blamed on the perpetrator.

The problem of infinite regress is still there, since there may be an indefinite number of levels. To have a level at which the permissibility of proposed moves can no longer be challenged, may work for machines. For humans such a limit has a ring of dogmatism. What the above proposal does to discourage a wanton ascent to metalevels is to charge the costs of each metadialogue on its loser. But then one could avoid to lose by ascending to the next level before the loss becomes apparent. All I can advise to those who meet with such an opponent is to abandon the dialogue!

As to equity: the rules are symmetrical and seem fairly balanced between giving rights to challenge the permissibility of moves and giving rights to the other party to challenge such challenges.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – On The Argumentative Quality Of Explanatory Narratives

Introduction

This paper tentatively draws together the three concepts of argumentation, narrative and explanation. The three concepts are all highly rich ones and denote complex areas. Some parts of each conception may have implications for or illuminate the other two – that will depend both on what one takes each of them to be, and on the perspective one chooses to employ. The existence of rival views within all three areas further adds to the complexity.

An exploration into the argumentative quality of explanatory narratives is a venture that requires great caution. Some explanations are arguments and some narratives are explanations, but it does not automatically follow that some narratives also are arguments. Again, it may depend on what one takes them to be. Should it emerge in the course of the analysis that narratives indeed are not arguments, I think that argumentation theory nevertheless can throw critical light on explanatory narratives. There is a significant overlap in vocabulary (e.g. use of such concepts as premise, antecedent, conclusion, warrant) that indicates the usefulness of argumentation theory, but equally evidently this overlap may cause confusion and mix-ups. Again, caution is called for, as well as precision.

My proposed exploration minimally requires that the notions of narrative and explanation be discussed such that the connections between them can be made clear. Furthermore, the connection between arguments and explanations must be discussed. Then we may find ourselves in a position to tentatively use argumentation theory to evaluate such narrative explanations; for example whether narratives distinguish between what is part of the narrative and what is evidence for the truth of its premises.

But first, the concept of a narrative, as it will be used here, must be made clear. My discussion will refer mainly to empirical narrative research done in the field of education, but it should be made clear that narrative theory is an interdisciplinary field, covering e.g. literary theory, history and education. Originally, narratives are fictional stories and belong to the domain of literary theory. I will not here discuss the wisdom in importing narratives, with all their connotations and presuppositions, to the educational field.

What Narratives Are

Despite the enormous existing body of literature, the notion of a narrative

remains fairly elusive, and its uses in educational research largely contested. It seems that there exists no generally agreed-upon view of narratives, but rather a set of overlapping meanings from which advocates of narrative may choose the meanings that best suit their intentions. Narratives are discussed as a way of making sense of life, a phenomenon, a method and a result (product) of this method (e.g. Carter 1993, Casey 1995/96, Clandinin & Connelly 1991). I will focus on narratives as products, that is, as written texts. The educational literature on narratives by and large focuses on elements or items to be found in such narratives in its explications of what narratives are. Thus, we are told, narratives consist of events, actions, intentions, characters and plots. These items are connected in some way; frequently it is required that they be organized in causal sequences (Gudmundsdottir 1990). The causal sequence makes up a meaningful, coherent whole with a beginning, a middle and an end. The demand for coherent wholes with non-random beginnings, middles and non-random ends dates back to Aristotle's *Poetics* (1982). His requirements concerned poetry and fiction, but have spilled over into narrative educational research – they are hardly left out of any accounts of narrative research. Events and actions should follow *from* one another, not just after one another. Things that happen by chance or are randomly present can hardly be fitted into this kind of coherent wholes.

Cheryl Mattingly (1991, p.242) defines narratives as follows:
Narratives, first of all, concern action. In stories people do things and as a result situations change, or things happen to people and as a result the people change. … stories do foreground intending, purposive agents in presenting how things have come about.

"How things came about" seems to be central to various definitions of narratives. Narratives may be conceived as representations of sequences that show, tell or explain how something came to be; how a certain result was achieved etc. It is the explanatory function of narratives that will be the focus of this paper.

Implicit in Mattingly's definition is a broader claim made on behalf of narratives, namely that they deal with *particular* events, actions, characters or intentions. For example, narrative researchers within the teacher thinking tradition investigate, describe and explain particular events that happened to particular teachers and/or particular students in particular classrooms at particular times (e.g. Gudmundsdottir 1990). In a much-cited article, Jerome Bruner (1985) makes a distinction between what he terms paradigmatic and narrative modes of

thought. The paradigmatic mode is the logic-scientific one. It deals in general causes, timelessness, universal and context-free explanations, empirical proof and consistency. The narrative mode, on the other hand, seeks explanations that are particular and context sensitive, it deals in human intentions and actions; it is essentially temporal and does not establish truth, but verisimilitude. Thus, in Bruner's words, "The imaginative application of the paradigmatic mode leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis. The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable historical accounts" (p.98). On Bruner's view, the two modes are irreducible.

As a prelude to the subsequent analysis, let me cite in full a narrative as it appears in an article by Cheryl Mattingly (1991). It seems that this narrative is fairly representative of empirical educational narratives, although this inference is based on an admittedly small sample and therefore must be viewed as highly hypothetical. Narratives tend to be short parts of "ordinary" research texts. Often they do not satisfy the criteria for something's being a narrative. How ever that may be, this is the story of a student therapist (1991, p.246):

When he [the patient] was on drugs he could do all the ADL [activities of daily living]. When he was off, he couldn't do anything. He had a mask-like facial expression. His changing ability to function was frustrating for him and his wife. The only adaptive equipment I gave him as a shoe-horn, because it was difficult for him to put on his shoes. I suggested … [*unclear*] but he didn't want that. He said that something would have to be changed because his bedroom was downstairs but finally agreed that he could have a bedroom in the living-room. He progressed rapidly and after a week and a half he was smiling, becoming more social. His wife told me, "He does nothing at home". I don't know if she could hear what we were telling her. We said, "He is not just sitting around. Many times he simply can't do anything because of the disease". When the wife heard that he would be on medication and that this would improve his functioning she said to him, "Good. There's a lot of chores around the house you can do". I don't know how much she heard of what we were telling her.

This story has no obvious plot, there is no causal sequencing, no non-random beginning or ending and no obvious temporal order. It is not even obvious precisely *what* "came about", or how. On the other hand, there are characters, actions and intentions, and I will, for the sake of the argument, accept the story as a narrative – it is after all presented as one. It illustrates what seems to be a

paradox in narrative empirical research, namely that the actual narratives appear to be rather simple compared to the rich and sophisticated theory about narrative that exists.

Narratives As Explanations

Advocates of narratives in education do not explicitly state what they take an explanation to be. They seem to take for granted that it is immediately understood or in some sense self-evident. This appears to be quite common. Indeed, as Frederick Suppe (1989) points out, virtually all literature on explanation tacitly assumes that explanations are explanations why; that is, an explanation is equivalent to an answer to a why-question. Already at this point we run up against a possible problem, since Mattingly clearly thinks of explanatory narratives as answering how-questions. On the other hand, literary theorist Paul Ricoeur (1984), who has an extensive discussion of narratives as explanations, sees explanations as why-explanations. I shall return to this problem subsequently.

One universal characteristic of all explanations is that events are explained after the fact. It is of great significance here that we already have knowledge *of* the result, the event, the happening when we set out to explain it, namely that it did take place. I shall return to the question of whether this trait effectively bars narratives from being arguments. For the moment let us focus on narratives as a kind of genetic explanation: a story leading up to the event-to-be-explained. As suggested above, this must involve causally relevant antecedent events. Explanatory narratives thus are reminiscent of what Wesley Salmon (1990) has termed the "ontic" conception of explanation: the explanation of an event is what produced it. In narratives, this is usually cashed out in terms of causal chains hooked up by a hindsightful narrator.

Hindsight plays a crucial role in the configuration of narratives. Configuration or emplotment means the "grasping together" of all the items a narrative consists of into a coherent whole with a non-random beginning, a middle and a non-random end. Telling stories of "how things came to be" clearly presupposes hindsight, even though advocates of narrative research do not discuss what is principally involved in hindsight reasoning. According to Mattingly, we tell stories of how a thing came to be by returning to its origins and tracing a coherent story from origin to present. That is, we first reason backwards and then tell the story forwards again. The hindsight position means that we possess knowledge of the outcome; that is, we already know the "conclusion", the end, for a fact. Narratives are thus explanations by retrodiction. As Paul Ricoeur puts it, in retrodiction we

begin "… from the fact that something has happened, we infer, backward through time, that the antecedent necessary condition must have occurred and we look for its traces in the present, …" (1984, p.135). The implications of hindsight for configuration are most vividly described by David Carr (1991). Whereas a radio announcer who gives a live description of a baseball game must describe what happens in the order that it happens, a *narrator's* position is entirely different. The narrative of the game "… is told afterwards and in full knowledge of who won. It will mention only the most important events, especially those that contributed to scoring points and thus to the outcome" (p.59).

What happens first of all in retrospective reasoning is a re-description of events and actions in terms of later events. Re-description is an act of configuration or emplotment in that is serves to tie events together by relating them causally. With knowledge of the outcome, the "conclusion", earlier events can be re-described as causes of the outcome in question. Philosopher of history Louis Mink (1978) maintains that hindsightful redescriptions are necessary in the construction of narratives; without hindsight things hardly hang together. Thus, without knowledge of the end we cannot pinpoint the beginning. Drawing on the work of Arthur Danto, Mink says that the narrator accomplishes this re-description by using a certain class of typical historical statements, namely those that describe events by referring to subsequent events – so-called *narrative sentences*. Such sentences also abound in everyday language usage. For example, "The murder of Grand Duke Franz Ferdinand on the 28th of June 1914 started WW1". When the shot was fired, nobody could have known it was the beginning of WW1. Common to all narrative sentences is that the original entity is described in a manner in which it could not have been described when it took place. The reason is that the description makes references to events that had not yet occurred at the time. The original entity gains its significance in the light of subsequent events, and a coherent narrative with beginning, middle and end may be produced. This kind of retrospective re-description surely must affect the explanatory power and goodness of narratives. I shall return to the issue.

Generality And Particularity

But first it is necessary to inquire into certain features of explanation theory, as they apply to narratives. To begin with, we should note that it seems to be agreed among philosophers of science today that there is no single logic of explanation. As William Dray pointed out as early as in 1957, the term "because" does not

commit the following answer to any particular logical structure (Dray 1957). Wesley Salmon, in his overview of philosophical literature on scientific explanation, maintains that "explanation" is used in many ways that have little or nothing to do with scientific explanation (Salmon 1990). It is a question where that leaves narrative explanations.

As we have seen, scientific explanations have generally been seen as answers to why-questions, and Carl Hempel's Covering Law model (hereafter CL-model) is generally seen as the first serious attempt to spell out what constitutes a correct answer to a why-question (Hempel 1965, 1966; the model was first published 1948 by Carl Hempel and Paul Oppenheimer). On the CL-conception of explanation, explanations are arguments, and all explanations contain and make use of a law or a (statistical) regularity. Hempel explicitly rejects the idea that causality plays any essential explanatory role (1965, p.352). In short, an event (explanandum) has been explained when it has been subsumed under a law or a regularity; that is, has been shown to be an instance of (be covered by) a law or a regularity. The deductive-nomological (DN) version is a valid, deductive argument in which the explanandum is deduced from premises consisting of a law and of initial conditions. The inductive-statistical (IS) version is an inductive argument. It includes among its premises a statistical regularity. The explanandum thus cannot be deduced, but the premises confer a high degree of probability on it.

This is not the place to delve into a discussion of the relative merits and demerits of the CL-model. Rather, I wish to apply some of the features of the model to throw some light on the nature of explanatory narratives. On the surface of things it would appear that if the CL-model represents *the* logic of scientific explanation, the explanatory narratives are indeed not scientific since they make no use of or reference to laws or regularities. In fact, most narrativists explicitly make a virtue out of *not* dealing in generalizations, witness the quote from Bruner above. Yet they see themselves as (social) scientists. But the issue points to deeper and more interesting problems in the configuration of explanatory narratives.

To begin with, it should be observed the CL-model and the narrative "conception" of explanation share the same framework, namely that of an opposition between particular and universal or general. The narrativists reside at the particularity end of this opposition, whereas the case is slightly more complex for the CL-model, since both the CL-model and narratives explain particular events. But whereas the CL-model explains by subsumption, narratives explain by rendering a causal sequence leading up to the event.

Narrativists have not used much space to discuss problems that may be involved in their insistence that narratives deal with particular people and particular events at particular times. One might speculate – rather maliciously, perhaps – that they are too preoccupied distancing themselves from what they take to be defining features of "traditional" research to spell out what they take "particular" to mean. We touch here upon deep philosophical and methodological problems in narrative configuration. What, for instance, is the unit of investigation in narrative research? Is it the characters? The events? How should an event be conceived? Hempel discusses the status of an event in his essay *The function of general laws in history* (1959). Here the notion of a historical event is subsumed under a general conception of event that puts it on a par with e.g. physical events. Then the individual event-to-be-explained is placed in a direct relationship to a law or a regularity to produce a DN- or an IS-explanation respectively. With suitable initial conditions added, the event can be deduced or inductively inferred and thus explained.

Evidently a number of things could be said (and have been said) about Hempel's application of the CL-model to historical explanation. For my purposes here, I shall simply observe that in order for this to work, the event in question must be repeatable; hence it possesses a degree of generality that may be unacceptable to the narrativist. But this is not clear, since narrativists do not specify what they mean by "particular". Does it, for example, imply that events are unique in the sense that they never repeat themselves? Paul Ricoeur (1984), in his lengthy discussion of French historiography, observes that the rejection of the CL-model seemed to imply a return to the conception of an event as unique. He goes on to make a point that also seems highly pertinent to empirical educational narrative research:

This assertion [about uniqueness] is false if we attach to the idea of uniqueness the metaphysical thesis that the world is made up of radically dissimilar particulars. Explanation then becomes impossible. The assertion is true, though, if we mean that, in contrast to the practitioners of the nomological sciences, historians want to describe and explain what actually happened in all its concrete details. But then what historians understand by "unique" means that nothing exists exactly like their object of inquiry (1984, p.124).

It seems to me that narrativists adopt the second sense of "particular" cited above, despite occasional uses of the term "unique" in narrative texts. In fact, narrativists have recourse to and naturally use general and classificatory terms in

their texts. For example, Mattingly speaks of "[Parkinson] patients", "therapists", "medication", "ADL", "husband" and "wife" in her story – all of them general, classificatory terms that allows the characters, events and actions in question to be placed in broad, general categories thus making a wide range of beliefs and knowledge applicable to the particular cases. Other narratives contain such words as e.g. "teaching" and "dialogue", both events that evidently repeat themselves. This represents a "push" toward the generality end of the continuum, and a few comments are in order. First, the level of "uniqueness" or particularity is relative to the level of precision chosen by the narrative researcher. Second, and closely connected to choice of precision level, is the problem of choice of reference class (Salmon 1990). Mattingly's student therapist has chosen very broad classificatory terms in her story, and the reference classes are nowhere mentioned. A fair assumption would be the class of all Parkinson patients. A narrower and more precise reference class would add to the particularity of the case, and it would also narrow the range of considerations that people automatically bring to bear, suggested by the classificatory terms used. If the reference class for the Parkinson patient in question was the class of "retired, physically clumsy businessmen suffering from Parkinson's disease", maybe the student even would have considered other interventions. Third, both Ricoeur and Salmon suggest that the need for explanations may arise from perceived differences between the case in question and those which are grouped under the classificatory term. Again, the choice of reference class affects the differences one perceives; hence, the explanation of differences one can give; hence, which narrative one produces about the case. It should be noted that the placement of something in a reference class in and of itself explains nothing.

The Relation Between Premises And Conclusion

It emerges from the above discussion that despite the push toward generality by the use of general, classificatory terms, narrative explanations do not explicitly formulate or use laws or regularities. In passing, though, it is worth noting that generalities of some sort seem to underlie the idea that explanations arise from perceived differences between a particular case and the cases usually grouped under the classificatory term. Particular differences stand out against an assumed background concerning how things are "in general", "usually" or "normally". Every explanatory narrative has recourse to such generalizations. However, the kind of premises or antecedents explicitly employed in narratives differs from the premises of the CL-model, as well as the relation of antecedents (beginning and

middle) to the conclusion (end). On the CL-model, the premises support the conclusion with certainty or near-certainty. The premises of a DN-explanation may be seen as constituting conclusive evidence for the conclusion, whereas the premises of an IS-explanation provide strong evidence (provided the evidence is relevant). On this view, the relation between premises and conclusion – the explanatory relation – may be construed as evidentiary (Salmon 1990).

As already stated, the premises of a narrative are made up of the causes that lead up to the conclusion or end. Narratives thus constitute a form of causal explanation; events should follow from one another, nor just after one another. A number of problems arise here. Should there be restrictions on choice of antecedent conditions? Should we distinguish between necessary and sufficient causes, and if so, what are the implications? And finally, how should we construe the relation between causes as premises and the conclusion?

The first problem points to the role of hindsight discussed above. To the best of my knowledge, narrative theory places no restrictions on the choice of antecedents, and as a consequence this choice is subject to well-documented hindsight effects. For example, outcome knowledge dramatically increases the perceived likelihood of the outcome in question (Fischhoff 1975, 1988). In fact, with hindsight the outcome frequently comes to be viewed as inevitable; expressed as e.g. “it couldn’t have happened otherwise” or “I do not see what I could have done differently”. Outcome knowledge also changes the judged relevance of data describing the situations that precede the event in question; as is clearly shown in Carr’s baseball example. Retrospective judges effortlessly make sense of what they know about past events by constructing coherent wholes. Such acts of configuration are so natural that we are largely unaware of hindsight effects on re-description. Narrative explanations of how things came to be a susceptible to hindsight biases. In addition, it is a well-documented empirical finding that causal inferences (from perceived effect or outcome to alleged cause) are highly unreliable. In narratives, it is not just a matter of establishing one antecedent – that would be what Ricoeur calls a truncated explanation – but an entire causal chain. With no restrictions on antecedents and virtually no harnessing of inferences, chances are fairly great of picking an incorrect cause at each step. But the result may be a coherent narrative with a beginning, proceeding through a causal sequence and ending with a closure of the plot.

The second problem, of necessary and sufficient causes, is obviously connected to

the retracing of causal chains, but is more interesting when the story is told forwards again to explain how things came to be – how the causal chain leads up to the end. The issue is discussed by Ricoeur, and I shall return to it in the subsequent section.

The third problem concerns the relation between premises and conclusion in narratives. Drawing on the work of W.B. Gallie, Ricoeur here introduces the notion of "followability". To follow a story is to "… understand the successive actions, thoughts and feelings in the story inasmuch as they present a particular 'directedness'" (1984, p.150). The orientation in a certain direction that we find here, Ricoeur says, amounts to recognition of a teleological function in the conclusion or end. But when a story is told forwards, the storyline must be followed up to the conclusion – in no way can the conclusion be deduced or predicted from the premises. It is unclear whether Ricoeur himself endorses this view, but Louis Mink certainly does. There can be no "detachable" conclusion in a historian's work, he claims, because the narrative as a whole supports the conclusion. The end is an integral part of the narrative order. Even though hindsight frequently makes us believe that we and other people could and should have known the result in advance, the story must be followed to its end so the "directedness" can be made visible, explicit. The relation between premises and conclusion is internal; the two cannot be viewed separately from each other. The implications of this for the argumentative quality of explanatory narratives will be further explored in the next chapter.

Theoretical Explanation

According to Frederick Suppe (1989), explanations as arguments do not capture the structure of explanations. With the assimilation of explanations and theories into laws, he claims, goes a failure to appreciate how theory structure radically affects the nature of scientific explanation.

A full-blown account of Suppe's view of explanation requires an account of his view of theories, but this is beyond the scope of this paper (readers are referred to Suppe 1989). However, his account includes some points that are highly pertinent to the present discussion. First, he agrees with Wesley Salmon that scientific explanation concerns explanation of *classes* of events. Explanations of particular events may have practical, but not scientific, value. The implication of this view for narratives is plain, but will not be pursued here.

Second, and more interesting, he enlarges the class of explanatory-seeking

questions by including who, where, how, which – questions that are not translatable into why-questions. The kind of explanation one can have, is determined by the structure of the theory in question. Some theories yield explanations *how*, but not *why*. For example, theories with statistical laws of succession (law applies not to empirical phenomenon, but to replica or model of phenomenon), yields a how-could explanation in that is shows how the model may assume a number of different subsequent states, and assigns probabilities to each state. This type of explanation makes no use of such notions as statistical relevance (Salmon), maximum specificity (Hempel) or causal notions. The laws have the in-built temporal asymmetry required for explanation, without explicit recourse to causal notions. This temporal quality is essential to explanatory narratives. A why-explanation can be supplied by a theory with a deterministic law of succession. Such a theory would require a development "path" of unique subsequent states, such that there is only one state in which the model could end up. An explanation *why* automatically provides a how-could explanation. With a deterministic law, it also provides a how-did explanation. The how-did question seems to be the narrative question of how things came to be.

It is now time to bring Ricoeur back into the picture. As we have seen, he thinks that explanations are causal whereas Suppe points out that there is no simple connection between causes and the ability to provide why-explanations. On Ricoeur's view, causal explanation occurs in two major forms; in terms of sufficient and necessary conditions. They provide different types of explanations; why-did and how-possible, respectively. So despite his brief suggestion that explanations are answers to why-questions, he claims that necessary conditions provide a kind of how-explanation. The sufficient condition relation, Ricoeur says, governs manipulation: we bring things about, or things come about. The necessary condition relation governs prevention: in setting aside x we prevent everything from happening for which x is a necessary condition (cause). And he exemplifies the explanatory-seeking questions these different relations are answers to:

We respond to the question "Why did such a state necessarily happen?" in terms of a sufficient condition. On the other hand, we respond to the question "How was it possible for such a state to occur?" in terms of a necessary, but not sufficient, condition (1984, p.135).

A few observations should be made. To begin with, his why-did question seems reminiscent of Suppe's why-question, with a unique state as the conclusion or

end. Ricoeur does not expand on this issue, so it is hard to say whether he also thinks that a why-did explanation requires a unique path leading up to the conclusion. Since the sufficient condition governs the "came about", it may seem that this is what Mattingly is after. It should be noted, though, that the how-possible question is entirely consistent with Mattingly's view of narratives as explanations *how*. He further complicates things by maintaining that explanations in terms of sufficient conditions allow for prediction. This evidently runs against the views of Louis Mink; and, it seems, many narrativists who wish to distance themselves from "traditional" science and its use of laws. Explanation in terms of necessary conditions do not allow for prediction, but rather for retrodiction, as we have seen. We might want to say that Ricoeur makes things very complicated by using the word "necessarily" in the question that he answers in terms of sufficient conditions. Mattingly makes no distinction between sufficient and necessary conditions, so we cannot tell what kind of answer she thinks will provide an explanatory narrative. It is a standard view among narrativists, however, that narratives are configurated in hindsight, that is, with retrodiction. Ricoeur does not tell us how a prediction may be possible or what it may look like, or whether it requires a unique path as well as a unique end-state. The question is interesting, also because it points to the problem of restrictions on antecedents raised above. Suppe maintains that in how-did explanations only knowledge of prior states and the theory may figure in the explanans. But Suppe's account of explanation is not causal, and narratives are not theories, nor do they employ theories in any conscious or explicit manner, although they have recourse to generalizations, especially if the explanandum is a deviation or a difference from "what usually is". The only safe conclusion at this point is that a lot of work is needed to endow narrative theory with a tenable account of explanation, whether causal or not.

Narratives, Explanations And Arguments

Before applying (selected parts of) argumentation theory to the nexus of problems described above, a few comments should be made. First, there is the problem of explanation-seeking questions. Traditionally, answers to why-questions are viewed as yielding explanatory knowledge, whereas *how* and *what* are viewed as yielding descriptive knowledge. On Suppe's view, however, many types of questions are explanation-seeking. Two points emerge from this: that different types of questions, their inter-translatability and their presuppositions should be inquired into, and that the distinction between descriptive and explanatory knowledge may not be as clear cut as we want it to be. Second, Ricoeur claims

that narratives are "self-explanatory" in the sense that the *what* and the *why* coincide. To narrate, to grasp things together, already *is* to explain. Thus, a narrator explains by using the process of emplotment. To describe what happened is also to explain why it happened (or perhaps how, depending on whether sufficient or necessary causes are employed). Third, Suppe's account of theoretical explanation seems useful for narrativists because it accommodates a wide range of explanation- seeking questions. However, Suppe states that scientifically relevant explanations *explain* classes of events, not just particular events. If we accept this view, which he shares with Wesley Salmon, where does that leave the scientific status of narratives? Does it turn narratives into a form of data rendering? Fourth, both Suppe and Ricoeur make the point that explanation theory leads a life separated from scientific theories and narratives, respectively. But their views are not parallel. Suppe thinks it is unfortunate that the structure of explanation should be discussed in terms of the structure of theories. Ricoeur thinks that science (in this case history) has removed explanation from the fabric of narratives and set it up as a separate problematic. History passes from descriptive to explanatory, he says, when *why* is freed from *what* and becomes a separate inquiry. It is unclear where this leaves narratives in relation to history, since he also claims that narratives answer *both* what- and why-questions at the same time.

In the subsequent discussion two problems will be highlighted; the question of the relation between premises and conclusion and the question of believability. Both are, it seems to me, at the heart of the application of argumentation theory to explanatory narratives, and both have the potential both to disentangle and to confuse matters.

The Relation Between Premises And Conclusion Revisited

According to Wesley Salmon (1984) an argument is a group of statements standing in relation to each other. Among the basic terms are conclusion, premise, (causal) inference and evidence – terms also found in explanation theory and highly pertinent to any evaluation of the quality of narratives.

Argumentation is a complex, interdisciplinary phenomenon, much the same as narratives. Different views emphasize different functions and different properties of arguments, and presumably the relation between premises and conclusions may also be construed in different ways. I believe that the nature of this relation is the core issue in deciding whether narratives can be construed as arguments or not. Whereas Hempel focuses primarily on the status of the conclusion, a number

of theorists argue that it is the relation between premises and conclusion that should be the main focus (e.g. Biro & Siegel 1992, Salmon 1984). In the previous chapter we saw that the relation between premises and conclusion in a narrative is internal in the sense that the conclusion is undetachable from the premises. The conclusion is a part of the causal chain, not an independent "result".

I seriously doubt that the premise-conclusion relation found in narratives is similar to that found in arguments, although caution is needed here because argumentation theories may construe the relation differently. However, I shall provide some premises for my (tentative) conclusion. First, there is the "status" or "position" of the conclusion. Two things seem important here. There is the independence of the conclusion and the premises that one finds in arguments; the two are independently knowable. This is denied in narratives, where the conclusion is an integral part of the narrative as a whole and in no way independent of the premises. Then there is the highly important point that in narratives and explanations, the conclusion is known for a fact. It exists as something that happened before we can tell a story about it or explain it. Second, if we follow Biro and Siegel (1992), arguments (premises) provide reasons to accept the conclusion. They base their argumentation theory on the claim that "… it is a conceptual truth about arguments that their central (…) purpose is to provide a bridge from known truths or justified beliefs to as yet unknown (…) truths or as yet unjustified beliefs" (p.92). This point is closely connected to the foregoing. A narrative conclusion or an explanandum is not an as yet unknown truth or an as yet unjustified belief. It is known for a fact, because it is something that already took place. The relation of premises and conclusion in arguments is one of justification; it is a matter of warranting our belief in the conclusion. But in narratives there is no need to warrant our belief in the conclusion, since we already know it for a fact. The problem of when reasons (evidence, premises) are *good enough* to warrant belief in the conclusion does therefore not arise in narratives as it does in arguments. *If* the point of arguments is to show that knowing the premises warrants knowing the conclusion, and *if* this justificatory relationship of premises to conclusion is at the heart of the very definition of an argument, then I conclude that narratives are not arguments. We have to look elsewhere or take a different perspective to make use of insights from argumentation theory to narratives.

Believability

Believability is at the outset mainly connected to one of the functions of arguments; namely their ability to persuade or convince. Recall Jerome Bruner's claim that the use of the narrative mode would lead to believable stories. Given that the conclusion (end, explanandum) is already known for a fact, the believability does evidently not concern the conclusion. Rather, I suggest – and Bruner does not say this – it concerns the narrative as a whole; the causal sequencing leading up to, culminating in or producing the conclusion.

One controversial issue immediately arises when the focus is shifted to believability; namely what kind of argumentation theory is involved. It is perhaps not entirely clear what is meant or implied when something, e.g. a narrative, is described as believable, but it is tempting to suggest that convincing the audience is at least partly involved. Biro and Siegel point out that if conviction is the main function of arguments, we arrive ultimately at a purely psychological theory of argumentation. Their own preferred conception is epistemic and places argumentation in a network of such epistemic concepts as knowledge, proof, evidence and rationality of beliefs. I will side-step this discussion, but I think that when unpacked the notion of believability of narratives exhibits both psychological and epistemological factors, and that their relative strength must be dealt with contextually. Believability is influenced both by various factors such as level of descriptive detail and opportunities for the audience to recognize their own experiences and views in the story as well as tight and truthful causal reasoning (Kvernbekk 2002).

Let us briefly look at a distinction made by Wesley Salmon (1990), between explanation-seeking and evidence-seeking why-questions. Salmon sees the two types of why-questions as a possible source of confusion between explanation and believability (although he does not use the term believability). A question about why an event happened is an explanation-seeking why-question, whereas a question about why we should believe something is an evidence-seeking why-question. We must take great care, he says, not to confuse explanatory facts with evidential facts. Offering an explanation for a fact is different from providing reasons for believing something is the case. Now, what we find offered in narratives are explanatory facts. These facts – largely in the form of a causal chain – do not comprise evidence for believing in the conclusion of the narrative, since we know this conclusion for a fact already. But evidence may play a different role for the believability of a narrative. As said in the previous chapter, narratives are configurated with hindsight. The hindsight position influences both choice of causes, inferences made and judgments of the relevance and relative

significance of data. Considerations of evidence should clearly be made by the narrator as he or she makes causal inferences to explain how things came about. Ultimately the believability problem concerns the narrative as a whole, since we are invited to believe the whole story and not just a part of it. In fact, we are specially invited to believe in the antecedent causal chain rather than in the conclusion, which we already know. This could, I suppose, be broken down into evidence for each causal inference that the chain consists of. We know that a great degree of detail seems to increase the believability of stories. As the truth of narratives is concerned, this is a double-edged sword, since probability theory tells us that the probability of a causal chain as a whole decreases the longer the chain becomes. Properties that make a story believable may thus counteract properties that concern the truth and probability of the story. Given genre demands, the evidence rarely (if ever) appears in the finished narrative, and I am not certain how conscious empirical narrative researchers are of the possibilities of making mistakes, picking out wrong causes etc. Evidence may this not appear in the product, but it should somehow be there in the process. Presumably this issue also ties in with the problem of restriction on antecedents. As far as I know and understand what is generally called the narrative method, no such restrictions are even discussed.

Conclusion

This paper is a first stab at a huge nexus of problems tying together the concepts of narratives, explanations and arguments. It seems to me that this nexus is largely an unexplored area. Unsurprisingly, conclusions should remain tentative.

Many narrativists think of narratives as being explanations, but the absence of a theory of explanation in narrative research makes it hard to judge to judge the quality of proffered explanatory narratives. Believability, as suggested by Bruner, seems an unsatisfactory criterion for various reasons. The notion is unclear, and unless we have a clear picture of what makes a narrative believable, the criterion is difficult to apply. Furthermore, a narrative can be believable and yet false or badly configurated. It seems to me that believability tends toward the psychological, and if one thinks – as I do – that narratives also should be judged by epistemic criteria, believability in itself is not sufficient. This is a highly contentious matter among narrativists and their critics. But to return to explanation: part of such a theory for narratives, I believe, awaits developments in general explanation theory and in our knowledge of different types of questions and their presuppositions. Much narrative research proceeds on simple, implicit

notions of explanation.

When argumentation theory is introduced, the picture gets even more complicated. In narratives, the premises consist of causes tied together in a chain that culminates in and produces the conclusion. The chain is described in hindsight, after the fact, and the relation between premises and conclusion is internal. The causes do not constitute evidence for the conclusion, and no evidence is needed since we know the conclusion for a fact. The configuration of a narrative always begins with the conclusion, and then inferences are made backwards from observed effect to alleged causes. A good, tight causal reasoning does not warrant belief in the conclusion, but it may warrant (or produce) belief in the narrative as a whole. It seems to me that narrativists pay little attention to evidence for the truth or adequacy of the premises, and argumentation theory may help focus this point which should be a major concern to narrativists who take an interest in the epistemic as well as the explanatory qualities of their narratives, over and above mere believability.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – How Narrative Argumentation Works: An Analysis Of Argumentation Aimed At Reconsidering Goals

Emotion, intuition, and physicality are not plagues that stalk the land of Reason, but perfectly natural and ordinary components of all human endeavor… we must analyze as serious components of argument those non-linear, non-logical activities of communicative practice… Argumentation Theory, if it is to come to truly serve the needs of real situated arguers, must open the concept of rationality to include the non-logical modes as legitimate and respectable means of argumentation.
Michael Gilbert, *Coalescent Argumentation* (1997, 26; 141-142)

The audience at the start of *The Longing: Based on Palestinian and Israeli Oral Histories* was large. The performance had been listed in the National Communication Association's 2001 annual meeting program as a special evening offering, and many of my colleagues who are especially interested in political communication and performance studies – and the conjunction of those two academic specializations – were present. The program listed three acts, with a total of 14 scenes, as well as a Prologue (entitled "What the West Does Not Know") and Refrains (at the end of the third act). At the end of the first act, I noted that several seats directly across from me were now vacant; at the end of the second, a glance at the row on both sides of my colleague and me as well as those in front of and behind us showed many empty seats. Ample anecdotal evidence, beginning in conversation with the one colleague who also remained throughout the performance and continuing later in the evening and during the following days with those who left early, confirmed that many – even, most – of these communication scholars had found the performance lacking, both as aesthetic event and as argumentation. Repeated phrases in their comments were "one-sided," "heavy-handed," "overstated," "well-intentioned but unpersuasive," and "unconvincing."

The Longing uses oral histories – stories spoken by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim sources – to argue for an alternative view of the political struggle that has continued in Palestine and Israel throughout the lifetime of its audience members. "Recording memories of difficult experiences and adapting them for public performance is a very complex process," the program notes say. The notes continue: "These stories provide a way of entering and reconsidering a very complex historical, political, religious and emotional arena. We offer these stories as a hope for peace with justice in both Palestine and Israel." Given the considerable interest in narrative argumentation in recent argumentation theory, this performance's apparent failure to convincingly – or persuasively – bring about that reconsideration troubled me. While talking about narrative in at a conference a few months later, I mentioned that apparent failure to another participant who had presented work on AIDS narratives. She compared it to successful attempts to present an alternative way of living in the stories told at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, as reported in a recent book by George Jensen, *Storytelling in Alcoholics Anonymous: A Rhetorical Analysis*. Upon my return home, I read the book with great interest and began to consider what it might contribute to accounting for the apparent failure of *The Longing's* stories, in contrast to the apparent success of AA stories as efforts to bring about reconsideration of complex situations. In other words, I began to consider both as argumentative efforts to convince diverse audiences of the viability of an alternative view on the possibility of (for AA participants) a personal peace within a life in recovery or (for *The Longing's* audiences) a political peace among the Palestinian and Israeli people.

Granted, there are substantial differences between the discursive domains of talks at AA meetings and performances of *The Longing.* But there also are similarities that justify considering them as comparable. Perhaps the strongest bond is that the stories within both domains have, as their goal, changes in attitude toward what's already known. In the former case, the changes sought are in attitude about what's known about "alcoholism as a family disease" (Jensen, 2000, vii). Alcoholics who come to AA meetings don't need to be told about the destructive effects of drinking on those who live with alcoholism, for they have ongoing experience of those effects on their families, careers, and themselves. Readers of Jensen's book also already know about those effects – perhaps from films and novels, if not from their own experience. In the latter case, as the director says in *The Longing's* program notes, the changes sought are in attitudes

about war as meaning "families losing their homes, parents losing their children, and people struggling to hold onto their land and their dignity," rather than a being a matter of boundary disputes, historical rights or privileges, or religious-ethnic differences. Although the stories told in *The Longing* are "specifically Palestinian," the director notes that he "quickly realized" that they "transcended national and cultural boundaries" (Avramovich in Program Notes, 2001, 5). More specifically, if also more abstractly, neither group of stories aims to impart information, in the sense of new knowledge provided in "bits and units"; rather, both are concerned, instead, with "views and beliefs" about what is already more-or-less known (Gilbert, 1997, 104). (The history, which provides a major dimension of *The Longing's* factual context, is presented in the *Prologue*, which is clearly delineated (in tone as well as on the printed program) from the stories that comprise the bulk of the performance).

This focus on "views and beliefs" rather than "bits and units" – that is, with the significance of information for people, rather than the imparting of information itself – is important for several reasons. First, it signals the relevance of Michael Gilbert's theory of coalescent argumentation, which takes that difference as the hallmark of argument, which he defines as "any exchange of information centered on an avowed disagreement" (1997, 104). He goes on to say that "the term 'information' is not used in the same sense that Information Theory uses it; that is, I am talking about views and beliefs rather than bits and units. . .the more indirectly information so construed can be exchanged, the broader is the sense of argument it isolates" (1997, 104). This attention to indirectness suggests the particular usefulness of Gilbert's theory for analyzing narrative argumentation, in which indirect communication of information's significance predominates.

Secondly, the definition's specification of information as "views and beliefs" rather than "bits and units" directs us toward morality rather than factuality. The stories told in AA meetings and in *The Longing* are concerned with morality, in the sense of suggesting methods and even standards for conducting one's life with others, rather than with factuality, in the sense of "bits and pieces" of information about the tellers' physical, cultural, or geopolitical environment. Hayden White calls our attention to this function of stories: "If every fully realized story… endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence… every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralize the events of which it treats (White in

Mitchell, 1980, 13-14; quoted in Jensen, 2000, 149-150). Neither set of stories urges ratification of a particular ethical system, such as is taught by (e.g.) Christian, Jewish, or Muslim religious traditions, although both indirectly communicate implicit methods and standards for living – i.e., morality.

This sense of morality is used by ethnomethodologists in identifying the methods (incorporating mores, standards and perhaps rules) that people use to accomplish social life. I'd argue that it's a sense of "moral" that's recognized in the "distinction between spirituality and religion" that George Jensen notes is a commonplace in AA, which "affirms a need to be close to a higher power, even as it argues against the kind of dogma that many, especially those who have renounced the training of their childhoods, associate with organized religion" (2000, 52). "Spirituality" here relates to a need for moral standards if people are to live in relative harmony with others and themselves, while "religion" typically relates to systems of ethics. *The Longing* presents the stories of Muslims, Jews, and Christians struggling with conflicts about how to live with one another, without attention to similarities or differences in their ethical codes.

This focus on indirect communication of the "views and beliefs" that ground methods for conducting our lives takes the argumentation in both of these discursive domains beyond the mode of reasoning that Michael Gilbert labels "Critical-Logical." He identifies three further modes – emotional/feelings, visceral/physical, and kisceral/intuitive – that comprise the "multi-modal argumentation" that is the descriptive basis for the "normative ideal" he names "coalescent argumentation" (1997, 74ff., 102). Accepting those three modes, Gilbert emphasizes, requires us to "extend," "suspend," and even "abandon" our allegiance to the "two core assumptions of classical approaches to argument and reasoning [that] are still pervasive," namely, that reasoning is linear thinking in regard to claims, and that those claims can be reasoned about in abstraction from their emotional, physical, intuitive, and political contexts (1997, 76). This expansion of the very meaning of reasoning, he emphasizes, is needed if we are to "separate the normative from the descriptive" despite the fact that, as "argumentation theorists," we "are largely drawn from a highly logical professional group that values linear reasoning above all other modes of persuasive communication" – for if "we are to treat argument as a human endeavor rather than as a logical exercise, we must make room therein for those practices used by actual arguers," rather than impose normative standards that

exclude any reasoning practices that can be described in actual usage (1997, 77).

From my standpoint as a philosopher of rhetoric, Gilbert's argument for expanding philosophy's "classical approaches to argument and reasoning" beyond linear reasoning and decontextualized examples is a welcome addition to contemporary rethinking of embedded assumptions that divide philosophical and rhetorical argumentation theory. More specifically, I find that the descriptive theory ("multi-modal argumentation") that grounds Gilbert's normative theory ("coalescent argumentation") recovers Aristotle's epideictic, or demonstrative, genre of argumentation. Demonstrative argumentation advocates particular actions on the part of present participants, and primarily works through displaying praiseworthy (or blameworthy) actions performed by others. It thus contrasts with two more generally celebrated genres: deliberative argumentation, which advocates future policies, and legal argumentation, which concerns judgment of past actions in accord with legal norms. This focus on the present, as well as epideictic's appeal to a general audience (rather than to policymakers or jurors) and its performative mode (reliant upon implicit and nonverbal demonstration, rather than reference to explicit policies and laws) encourages me to search for clues to the apparent success and failure of these sets of stories by looking more carefully at their temporal and audience characteristics.

As narratives, both sets embody the temporality of lived experience: "the used to be" and "what happened," which provide the context and specifics of the relevant past; the "now," which tells how things are at present; and "the anticipated," which projects or predicts how things will be or could be in future. The expository form of "critical-logical" reasoning eschews that temporal structure. The emotional, physical, and intuitive aspects of "multi-modal" reasoning, however, require reference to lived temporality. Narrative temporal structure supports the goal shared by the two sets of stories, namely, the possibility of melioration in the circumstances they relate, but it does so in significantly different ways. The performers in *The Longing* tell of a "used to be" that's assumed to match the experience of their audiences in a crucial aspect: the tellers' and listeners' "used to be" are not marked by "families losing their homes, parents losing their children, and people struggling to hold onto their land and their dignity" (Program Notes, 2001, 5). However, congruity of tellers' and listeners' lived experience is limited to that "used to be" temporal dimension. It does not extend to "what happened" or to the results of those events: their "now," which is

marked by longing for a return to what "used to be." The listeners have not lived the "what happened" portrayed in the performance, and thus cannot identify with the longing (for return to "what used to be") that is the predominant feature of the tellers' "now." For the tellers, melioration is associated solely with that longed-for return. As a listener, however, I bring to the performance my typical everyday association of melioration with future change; with anticipated difference, rather than return to the same ("what used to be"). This difference in implicit temporality limits my ability to identify with the performers' longing.

In the AA context the storytellers have lived the "used to be " experiences they recount in their testimony. They tell "what happened" from the perspective of a "now" that they describe as vastly improved in comparison to the "used to be," and their feelings about the "used to be" are in no way characterized by longing. Tellers who are "old-timers" present their "used to be" as similar to the "now" of the "newcomers," who are encouraged to recognize that congruence despite differences in their individual histories (Jensen, 2000, 11). Thus the listeners can use typical associations of melioration with the future – and most importantly, they can anticipate and even picture that future, for its content is supplied by the tellers' account of their "now." Both tellers and listeners share basic features (again, with individual variations) in "what used to be": childhood feelings of being different from their peers, entering into a drinking life that enabled them to feel that they belonged, and subsuming other aspects of their lives within the "drunkologs" that predominate in newcomers', but not old-timers', tales (2000, 3ff., 235). Both share a "now," in that they are bodily present in the same space, at the same time. But the content of that spatiotemporal form is different: the "now" of the tellers is the "could be now" of the listeners, while the tellers retain their "now" insofar as they continue in the community that the listeners are invited to co-constitute. In other words, the "what happened" of the tellers is presented as "what could be, starting now" for the listeners, if both groups join in community-sanctioned practices that are summarized as "the program"; e.g., "go to meetings," "take one day at a time." The identification between tellers and listeners that Jensen reports as crucial to the AA experience is enabled by this combination of actual and potential sharing of temporal dimensions and their content.

An evident difference between the two sets of stories is connected with this difference in temporality: none of the participants in *The Longing* (neither actors,

who speak the tellers' words, nor listeners) have lived the experiences that are storied in the performance they share, whereas AA participants all have lived experience of the "used to be" dimension. Yet the actors' implicit choice to participate in this performance and their explicit affiliative statements in the Program Notes suggest their belief that "entering and reconsidering" these stories furthers a hope for melioration – specifically, "hope for peace with justice," which clearly would be an improvement upon the tale of war and injustice testified to by the characters the perform (Program Notes, 2001, 5). E.g., one of the actors, Kris Duncan "hopes that this performance will honor and speak out for those she has met and learned from"; another actor, Jennifer Voorhees, "dedicate[s] her performance to the people whose stories she is telling" (2001, 7; 8). The audience's choice to attend the performance suggests that they, also, believed that "entering and reconsidering" these stories would support that "hope for peace with justice," which may well be at the core of the moral reasoning (procedures, standards, or rules for living with others) that, as I mentioned earlier, is embedded in these stories.

The most crucial difference between these domains may involve the specificity of the goal, peace, that's shared by both sets of stories. The "hope for peace with justice" portrayed in *The Longing* is a geopolitical one, literally global in its ramifications. How that hope might be furthered by individuals' particular practices (beyond giving "a contribution to sustain this oral history project," which is mentioned on the last page of the Program Notes) is unclear. The hope endemic to AA storytelling, however, pertains to the relatively narrow sphere of the participants' individual and particular situations (including their families and associates), and provides a procedure for bringing about the hoped-for peace: Memoirs of both the founders and contemporary members of AA emphasize that melioration of participants' "nows" depends upon their ability to identify with tellers' stories by engaging, daily, in specific practices advocated in those stories.

Jensen's analysis suggests that this ability is furthered by reasoning that Gilbert labels "emotional," "visceral," and "kisceral," rather than with traditional logical reasoning. For example, he summarizes one member's desire for serenity – a personal mode of peace – as sufficient to overcome her "ambivalent reaction to the program's slogans": "Knapp only began to accept the simple way of living expressed in the slogans because she identified with those telling their stories and she wanted what the program's ideology seemed to bring: a calmer life"

(2000, 85). That identification prevails over biographical particularities (e.g., ethnicity, economic status, gender). As another memoir states, the "program 'message' of hope is superior in value to historical truth – but this notion co-exists with the ideal of honesty, so that representations must be carefully, deliberately mediated" (O'Reilly, 1997, 158, in Jensen, 2000, 98). The tellers' careful and deliberate (one might say, formulaic) communication of stories reinforces the importance of ceasing to understand oneself as different from others who live with alcoholism, and coming to understand oneself through similarities with those others: "Within AA, at least initially, it is crucial that the newcomer identify with others, begin to move beyond a sense that no one else in the world has 'my kind of problems,' no one else 'has done the things that I have done.'" (Jensen, 2000, 98). As epitomized by one speaker: "'If you look for the similarities, you'll probably stay sober. And, if you focus on the differences, you'll probably continue to drink'" (AA Talk, Dr. Paul O., in Jensen, 2000, 98).

Two theoretical proposals seem to me helpful for understanding what encourages (or not) an ability to identify with goals. The first is Walter Fisher's (1987) recognition of "coherence and fidelity" as essential characteristics for a narrative's acceptance by an audience. The progression of "used to be," "what happened," and "now" in AA stories displays both of those characteristics. There are no gaps in the causal or circumstantial connections the tellers portray that might strain listeners' credulity. The stories' inner consistency supports their tellers' presentation of them as trustworthy accounts, similar enough to the listeners' experience of what "used to be" to be accepted as models for living their "now" and anticipating what will or could be in future. In other words, the past and present dimensions of AA stories ring true to their listeners' actual experience, and so are trusted as guides for their future practices and situations.

The second helpful theoretical proposal is a distinction crucial to Michael Gilbert's description of "multi-modal argumentation": that between positions and claims. "A position," as Gilbert defines it, "is a matrix of beliefs, attitudes, emotions, insights, and values connected to a claim" (1997, 105). These components embody the feelings, physicality, and intuitiveness that characterize human experience, and which Gilbert's theory of argumentation includes as emotional, visceral, and kisceral reasons relied upon as "legitimate and respectable means of argumentation" by "real situated arguers" who employ "multi-modal argumentation" in their "communicative practice" (1997, 26; 142;

quoted in context in the epigraph). Those arguers reason about the positions that situate them in ways that are more inclusive of their experience than is permitted by "critical-logical" reasoning. Gilbert honors the latter as "a basic, clear, and valuable mode of argumentation vital to academic and commercial enterprises" (1997, 81). Insofar as it reasons from de-contextualized claims that can be abstracted from stories, however, rather than from contextualized (i.e., situated) positions that are the very stuff of human experience as it occurs and as it is storied, "critical-logical" reasoning seem to be less operative than "multi-modal" reasoning" in the narrative argumentation embedded in stories.

"Claims," Gilbert holds, "are best taken as icons for positions that are actually much richer and deeper. A claim is merely a linguistic tag or label… like the tip of an iceberg… Arguments, then, ought to focus on positions rather than claims if they are to proceed to agreement" (1997, 105). When we apply this distinction between experiental positions and abstracted claims to analyzing the arguments presented in these two sets of stories, three factors – temporality, identification, and agency – emerge as important to positions, although they are unimportant (indeed, removed) when we translate the positions told about in stories into claims made by those stories.

AA stories and *The Longing's* stories display a common temporal form of "what used to be," "what happened," and "what we're like now" (Jensen, 2000, 11, 51, 73). The AA teller dismisses the importance of variations and even substantial differences in the details of content through a single claim that is ritually repeated – "I am an alcoholic" – and that unites the "now" told from the position of "sober alcoholic" with the "now" experienced from the position of "practicing alcoholic." The full opening of any AA story begins with an indication of individuality that only partially individuates, because of its partial naming. In its classic and often parodied form, the opening is: "Hello, I'm Bill." The audience response – "Hello, Bill" – constitutes, as Jensen notes, "a dialogic exchange that is surprisingly complex" and initiates "a rhetorical act that transforms" both speaker and listener (2000, 79).

My analysis of this ritually-repeated exchange suggests that it epitomizes an intricate blending of sameness (the greeting term) and difference (the name) that characterizes any community, within which many speakers of "an 'I' discourse" act as a "we" who repeat the second sentence of the utterance ("I am an alcoholic.") but do so within a culture that refrains from giving advice to any

"you" (Jensen, 2000, 10; 65). Jensen identifies the exchange as a ritual practice that accomplishes an "erasure of difference [that] accentuates similarity and promotes objectivity" (2000, 81). By transforming individually spoken problems into commonly articulated ones, speakers (who in other instances of ritual repetition are listeners) both are, and yet are no longer, their former selves: "The transformation of identity that comes with the utterance of 'I am an alcoholic' does not kill off the former self," for no one ever says "'I used to be an alcoholic'" (Jensen, 2000, 82). This communal telling, and thus, positioning, of each person's situation as different "intonations" of the same "now" enables a sharing of each story "before an audience," and then, "with an audience," rather than a telling – or even, preaching – "to an audience" (Jensen, 2000, 54; 78ff.; 91; 107; 111). The result is identification with a commonly-practiced way of life, as the positions of each participant in the meeting – their emotional states, physical practices, and intuitive responses to difficulties – and negotiated and coalesce into a communal position that supports the agency of each member. In other words, the differences between the practices of the "practicing alcoholic" and the "recovering alcoholic" are not formulated as claims to be argued, but are enacted as positions to be negotiated (adapted and adopted) within a community-sanctioned ethos of looking for similarity without denying difference. Within this continuous process of negotiation, transformation occurs as participants attend meetings, repeat, in their diverse intonations, the community's rituals, and engage in the practices that are advocated by the "old-timers" performances. The "practicing alcoholic" becomes a "recovering alcoholic" not by accepting claims about his or her situation, but by adopting positions that transform their present situation. The goal of peace is attained through enacting alternative practices that signify transformed positions, rather accepting alternative beliefs or affirming knowledge claims proffered by arguments that "win."

Participation as speaker/actor or listener/audience member in the performance of *The Longing* that I attended may have won some members of the audience (even, some who left early) over to the claims articulated in the Prologue, enacted throughout the 14 acts, and re-articulated in the Refrains. The lack of congruity in temporality that I mentioned earlier, however, seems to limit listeners – who can only respond through applause (which signifies affirmation of a claim) or leaving (which could signify disagreement) – to their initial positions as audience members to whom – rather than before or with whom – the speakers tell their story. Perhaps the basic difficulty with this performance of narrative argument is

that no one's morality (in the sense of ways of being with others) seems to be transformed by the experience, despite the performers' earnest repetition of information that could be summarized as claims within a form of traditionally-accepted argument:

Any government that seizes the homes and vineyards of a segment of the population living within its (self-proclaimed) borders, and gives that property to members of another segment of its population, is unjust and must be resisted.
The Israeli government perpetrates such seizures, and does so within its (self-proclaimed) expanded borders.
Thus, the Israeli government (and the segment of its population that benefits from those seizures) is unjust, and must be resisted.

Expanding this critical-logical form into multi-modal argumentation that characterizes the practices of real arguers would require accessing the feelings, physicality, and intuitive ways of being spoken of by the performers and establishing relationships between them and our own experience. But we as audience members lack lived experience of how it "used to be," and so we are limited in our response to "what happened," and unable to share the longing (for a return to the "used to be") that is the tellers' experience of "how it is now." We tend, therefore, to rely on an alternative experiential structure: we envision a future of how it "could be" that differs significantly from the tellers' longing to return to their past, as things "used to be" before their constantly-renewed memories of "families losing their homes, parents losing their children, and people struggling to hold onto their land and their dignity" (Avramovich, in Program Notes, 5). Upon leaving the performance, we are apt to enter into argument (oral or imagined; with ourselves or others) that proposes claims about an alternate political future, based upon our own experience "of the now" – say, in a multiethnic context such as the U.S., which was formulated, in large part, to meliorate the conflicts that marked how "it used to be" in its founders' (and later immigrants') experience in the old country.

Must we then conclude that there is nothing to be gained by listening to others whose claims testify to an alternative experience that we cannot share – and who long for a past that present circumstances cannot accommodate? What is at issue here will not be resolved by the addition of "bits and units" of information that might (each party to the dispute would hope) strengthen one's claims at the expense of the other's, and so accomplish a winning argument. Frustration of that

goal (winning the argument as to whose claims are to triumph) seems to leave, as the only alternative, continued destruction of lives and property – in other words, frustration of the goal of peace.

Although I have focused here on the descriptive aspect of Michael Gilbert's coalescence theory, I want now to refer briefly to the normative aspect of his theory in order to suggest the value of shifting the ground of argument from claims to positions. Recognizing that currently recognized goals are frustrated is a positive beginning, since Gilbert's normative theory is based on "key assumptions" about goals: "Every arguer has a complex set of goals," which "range over more than one modality" – which is to say, which include emotional, visceral, and kisceral reasons, along with the critical-logical reasons that are traditionally emphasized by argument strategies oriented toward claims strong enough to accomplish argumentation's "most general goal," which is "agreement" (Gilbert, 1997, 136). But the goal of reaching "agreement" through winning an argument, Gilbert notes, "does not occur frequently," and the "win" is unstable: "one would not be surprised to find, at the next encounter, that one's opponent has reverted to the previously defeated claim" (Gilbert, 1997, 103). This occurs, I want to propose, because the "win" has been achieved through "critical-logical" rather than "multi-modal" argumentation. Thus it has employed linear reasoning about claims, as in the deliberative and forensic modes I mentioned earlier, rather than engaging a demonstrative (epideictic) mode that would appeal to participants' emotional, visceral, and kisceral – as well as critical-logical – reasoning; through showing how things could be, rather than telling how they should be.

Gilbert's normative theory advocates a goal of coalescence, rather than winning, sought through a procedure that begins when arguers "expose the positions" in order to "find the points of commonality" across them, and so "explore means of maximizing the satisfaction of goals that are not in conflict and explore ways of satisfying goals that are apparently in conflict" (1997, 119). What is exposed in that first step, I suggest, is the complexity of positions formed in the "ways of conceptualizing and relating" intrinsic to multi-modal arguments (Gilbert, 1997, 90). These ways are basic to any argument's backing (in Toulmin's sense), for they are ways of "conceptualizing and relating" those "views and beliefs" that form the emotional, physical, and intuitive lived experience – the "shared concerns and values" (Gilbert, 1997, 121) – that underlie the opposing stories we

tell. Once we recognize the largely non-discursive backing of multi-modal argumentation, we can begin listening to the stories as the AA audience listens: with emphasis on the emotional, visceral, and kisceral similarities that remain unarticulated in the backing of our argumentation, rather than on the differences that are too easily articulated in propositional form as an argument's claims. Within that alternative mode of listening, a goal other than winning can be discerned: creating a common "could be" that's reoriented from winning claims to enacting alternative positions.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Rhetoric And Dialectic In Martin Luther King's 'Letter From Birmingham

Jail’

1. Rhetoric, Dialectic, and Appeals to Credibility

As the field of argumentation has moved from a formal to an informal or dialectical perspective, it has also, often without conscious recognition, adopted some of the interests traditionally associated with rhetoric. So long as arguments were conceived on the formal deductive model, social and contextual considerations were regarded as irrelevant. An argument was to be judged on the content and formal relationship of the propositions it contained and appeals to such contextual matters as the credibility of the arguer were regarded as fallacies. With the rise of informal logic, however, the essentialism of the formal deductive model gave way to a more practical conception of argumentation that recognized argument as a social practice and that encompassed consideration of the persons who engaged in it and the circumstances surrounding its conduct. Appeals to context that were once categorically dismissed as fallacies have been reconceived as strategies or schemes that can have legitimate uses, and informal logic (or dialectic as some have called the new approach) has addressed matters that fall squarely within the traditional domain of rhetoric, since circumstances such as time, place, occasion, persons, and the like have always been regarded as proper, if not necessary, considerations in rhetorical studies.

In order to illustrate this engagement with matters rhetorical (and its limits), I want to refer to a recent paper by Trudy Govier (1999) that treats the problem of credibility from the perspective of current thought in informal logic. The paper deals with the *tu quoque* version of *ad hominem* argument, and Govier attempts to demonstrate that, as opposed to the view presented in the “standard logical treatment,” the tu quoque appeal is not always fallacious. She begins with the premise that an argument is something more than collections of premises and conclusions, because it is always also a social activity involving an arguer and an audience. Consequently, the relationship between arguer and audience is relevant to an assessment of the quality of an argument. If the audience is to treat the arguer’s argument seriously, it must regard the arguer as credible, and Govier maintains that at least two dimensions enter into an assessment of credibility – an epistemic dimension (Does the arguer have sufficient knowledge about the issue

in question?) and an ethical dimension (Is the arguer non-deceptive and "genuinely doing what he or she appears to be doing"?). The tu quoque allegation, on Govier's account, raises a relevant question about the ethical dimension, for if someone speaks inconsistently or speaks one way and acts another, the audience has reason to believe that he or she does not really believe the propositions asserted in the argument and, as a consequence, has reason to doubt whether the arguer is sincere or is even genuinely engaged in the process of argument. Tu quoque allegations then, are not inherently fallacious, because, while they have "no bearing on the propositional content of the original argument," they do bear "on its social presuppositions" and "are relevant to the force of the argument on an audience…. Obviously, to say this is to insist that the force of an argument for a given audience depends quite properly on more than its propositional content" (1999: 14-20).

The word rhetoric never appears in this essay, but most rhetoricians, I believe, would find it interesting and relevant to their concerns, since the basic themes refer to such standard items in rhetorical lore as the credibility of the arguer, the role of the audience, the social relationship between arguer and audience, and the force of argument in relation to an audience. Thus, Govier's essay reveals an affinity between informal logic, as it is now conceived, and traditional rhetoric even when that relationship is not explicitly recognized. At the same time, however, once this affinity is noted, we can also consider points at which two approaches diverge, and this exercise should serve as a useful guide to the work of translation between them.

In the first place, Govier displays a more focused and restricted interest in credibility than do rhetoricians. She limits her attention to the role credibility plays in logically justified inference and stresses the negative side of the issue; she does not consider credibility as an argumentative resource but as a limitation on the force of an argument; her concern is to determine when it is reasonable for an audience to disregard an argument because of the arguer's inconsistency. The rhetorician takes a different view, one that emphasizes credibility as a constructive element in argumentation, as a mode of arguing (*ethos*) coordinate with logical proof. From this rhetorical perspective, the dimensions of credibility are more numerous and complex than the two that Govier lists and finds sufficient for her purposes. As Alan Brinton has observed, the conception of ethos includes at the least the following elements: "competence in the subject-matter at hand,

good intentions, shared values and interests and assumptions with the audience, truthfulness, and trustworthiness." This list includes Govier's criteria but moves far beyond them in respect to positive features of character. What the rhetorician wants is an arguer who, as Brinton says, embodies "the general *ethos* (character) of the society. This is someone "we can trust to express our shared values, to think in terms of our common assumptions, to exercise good judgment, and to speak for us" (1985:55). Rhetorical ethos, then, eventuates in the embodiment of cultural values, and this goal indicates an interest toward character that is not recognized in logic or dialectic.

Secondly, consistent with the orientation of informal logic, Govier studies credibility in relation to justified belief. By contrast, deliberative rhetoric, the genre where character plays the most prominent role, frequently adopts action rather belief as its end (Brinton 1986: 248-251). This teleological shift complicates the argumentative task since it adds important social and volitional dimensions to the task. Deliberative rhetors often must negotiate the ambiguity and tension between the principles an audience accepts and its perception of the circumstances of a particular case. The standard topics of deliberative rhetoric, the honorable and the expedient, suggest this tension, and in responding to it, the rhetor must be able to "size up" the audience and demonstrate a capacity (a form of *phronesis* or *prudentia*) that makes it possible to balance situated particulars and more durable principles. This capacity does not correspond to a fixed, abstract standard, but manifests itself as it is deployed and so it is expressed in the action of deliberative performance. Thus, insofar as the rhetor performs well as a deliberator, he or she enacts the kind of character appropriate for deliberative judgment, and enactment emerges as an important aspect of rhetorical ethos.

Deliberative rhetoric also typically engages problems that occur when belief and volition are misaligned, when an audience accepts certain principles but fails to act on them. Here, in a situation that reverses the direction of the dialectical *ad hominem*, the audience, and not the arguer, is called to account for inconsistency. Normally, argumentation of this kind is delicate and difficult because audiences do not readily acknowledge inconsistencies, and if the arguer is to make this discrepancy apparent and salient to the audience, and he or she must effect a general reframing of the situation. The rhetor, that is, must evoke a new perspective that brings to light suppressed or undetected inconsistencies, and

opens ground for new argumentative possibilities. Evocation, then, is another distinctive aspect of rhetoric.

By using Govier's essay as a point of reference, I have located three features – embodiment, enactment, and evocation – that distinguish a rhetorical approach to argumentation from the approach used in contemporary informal logic and dialectic.

I now want to explain these dimensions of argumentation so as to make the rhetorical sensibility and its apparatus more accessible to other students of argumentation, but to achieve this end, I will present a detailed case study rather than a direct exposition. This strategy is consistent with the rhetorical perspective, and to explain why it is, I will refer one last time to Govier's essay and mark another difference of tendency between rhetoricians and informal logicians.

Govier's account of tu quoque sustains a general, abstract perspective. She is, of course, committed to understanding social context, and she is sensitive to particular cases and uses them as a source of evidence and as a test for her analysis. Nevertheless, she consistently deals with tu quoque as an abstract type of argumentative inference, and she is much less concerned about the context of any particular argument than with the contextual features that generally enter into the production of argument. In the rhetorical context, analysis remains much more closely connected with specific acts of arguing and the contexts in which they appear. Since rhetorical arguments are grounded in and directed toward the particular case, the force of an argument can hardly be understood or evaluated without reference to the case. As Brinton has noted: "It is characteristic of the rhetorical, in contrast with the logical, that it requires attention to the particular" (1985:56).

The dialecticians who are now consciously appropriating the techniques and perspectives of the rhetorical tradition are becoming increasingly sensitive to this point. As the work of Walton, Tindale, and others reveals, they are less satisfied with simple, textbook examples and more inclined to undertake detailed analyses of real cases. The most dramatic example of this development comes from van Eemeren and Houtlosser, who present a thorough and careful reading of a classic Dutch text, William the Silent's *Apologia*, in order to support their inquiry into the rhetoric of argument. In what follows, I want to offer a counterpart to their study by considering a classic American text, Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

2. Letter From Birmingham Jail: Background

Early in January of 1963, the Southern Leadership Conference (SCLC), the civil rights organization headed by the Reverend Martin Luther King, targeted Birmingham, Alabama for a non-violent direct action campaign. Such campaigns had been occurring for several years in the southern part of the United States, and they involved rallies, marches, boycotts, sit-in demonstrations and other similar tactics for the purpose of protesting and eventually eliminating racial segregation and other forms of discrimination. Birmingham was an especially important target. It was not only one of the largest cities in the South, but it was also known as an entrenched center of opposition to racial integration. The city had a long and often brutal record of repressing its Black citizens, and the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations had employed violence so often that the city was sometimes called "Bombingham." The Governor of Alabama, George Wallace, had won election on a platform of "segregation forever," and the city's Commissioner of Public Safety was Eugene "Bull" O'Connor, a man who personified obstinate and heavy-handed resistance to the civil rights movement. The movement itself had not scored a major victory in some time, and so the Birmingham campaign represented a critical test of whether it could regain momentum and succeed in overcoming one of the most powerful sources of opposition to it.

Matters were further complicated by the internal political situation in Birmingham. Anxious to repair the City's tattered image and to eliminate Bull Connor, a group of white moderates had succeeded in reforming the City's system of government, and a mayoral election was to be held in March. Connor was one of the candidate, and SCLC, fearing that a protest effort might create a backlash in Connor's favor, decided to withhold action until after the election. The results, however, proved indecisive. Bull Connor and the more moderate Albert Boutwell emerged as the two leading candidates, but neither won a majority, and so a second, run-off election had to be scheduled for April 2. Once again SCLC waited for the election. Boutwell won, and on April 3 SCLC launched its campaign of non-violent direct action.

The campaign did not begin on an auspicious note. Contrary to King's expectations, only a handful of protestors joined in the demonstrations, and few were willing to go to jail. SCLC had planned to create a crisis by filling the jails beyond their capacity, but after eight days, fewer than 150 people had been arrested, and new volunteers were increasingly hard to find (Branch, 1988:

727-728). Press coverage also failed to meet expectations, and the reactions to the campaign were largely unfavorable. *The Washington Post* maintained that direct action should not have occurred until the Boutwell administration had a reasonable opportunity to establish itself, and it judged that the demonstrations were of doubtful utility. Attorney General Robert Kennedy thought that the effort was ill timed, and even the local Black newspaper dismissed it as "wasteful and worthless" (Branch, 1988: 737, Bass 2001: 104-105). As David Garrow has observed, there was "a feeling among several important constituencies – the black ministers, some of the professional people, the most sympathetic local whites, the Kennedy administration – that Boutwell's victory was a compelling reason to delay the protests. These groups shared the hope that once a moderate administration took office, both the merchants and the city government would grant some of the movement's requests without demonstrations being necessary" (1986:238).
Yet another problem developed when the city's attorneys obtained an injunction from the federal court forbidding King and others from sponsoring, encouraging, or participating in a demonstration unless they obtained a permit from the city. SCLC leaders generally had been reluctant to violate federal court orders, since they regarded the federal courts as a crucial ally. In this case, however, to accept the injunction was for all intents and purposes to bring the direct action campaign to an early halt, and King resolved to violate the injunction himself and submit to arrest in the hope that this "faith act" would the movement McWhorter 2001:355). For symbolic reasons, King waited until Good Friday (April 12, 1963), and on that day, he led a march through the city's streets and was arrested. Refusing to post bail until the 19th, King remained in jail for eight days (Branch 1988: 734-47, Garrow 1986: 241-246).

On the morning after his arrest, the *Birmingham News* published a short open letter signed by eight prominent clergymen. These men were regarded as moderates on the race issue, and just three months earlier they had signed another public letter that directly appealed for citizens of the Alabama to obey the court order to desegregate schools and that indirectly criticized Governor Wallace's policy of defiance. In this second letter, the clergymen also urged moderation and obedience to the law, but now their criticism was turned implicitly toward King and his program of non-violent direct action. The letter asserted that the city was moving toward a new, constructive, and realistic approach to racial problems, and demonstrations, "led in part by outsiders," were both unwise and untimely. Racial issues ought to be resolved through "open and

honest negotiations," and nothing had been accomplished by actions that incited "to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be." The authors praised the community as a whole, and the law enforcement officials in particular, for handling the situation in a calm manner, and they concluded with a plea for the Black residents of Birmingham to withdraw support from the demonstration and to resolve their grievances through the courts and the negotiating process (Bass 2001: 235-236).

King's lawyer smuggled the newspaper to him in his prison cell, and according to the standard account, King immediately began to compose a response (at first writing on the margins of the newspaper since he had no other paper). The published version of the letter is dated April 16th, and though we have good reason to believe that the document was not actually completed until after King left jail, its tone and texture support the impression that the author composed it from within a prison-cell (Bass 2001: 131-152 Branch 1988: 737-745). The letter had little impact in the immediate context, but before the end of 1963, it had circulated widely both as a pamphlet and as reprinted in magazines. It soon won a large and enthusiastic audience and eventually earned a place in the canon of American political rhetoric and in anthologies of American literature.

3. The Letter: Dialectical Aspects

As a student at Boston University, King was fascinated by Hegel's philosophy, not because of its metaphysics or ethics, which he rejected, but because of its dialectical method. The Hegelian pattern of paired oppositions and synthetic resolution seemed to fit King's own intellectual and temperamental inclinations, and one his professors, L. Harold DeWolf, commented that "regardless of the subject matter, King never tired" of moving from thesis to antithesis and from there toward a synthesis (Garrow 1986: 46). This dialectical sensibility is fully apparent in the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and in fact, the text may be characterized as "dialectical" in several senses of the term.

First and most obviously, the text works through a series of opposing arguments. Aside from the brief introduction and conclusion and two sections that King labels as "confessions", the letter consists of a seriatim response to claims attributed to the eight clergymen. The following topical outline reveals this pattern clearly:

A. Introduction

B. Refutation

1. That King is an outsider

2. That King and his supporters should negotiate rather than demonstrate
3. That the demonstrations are ill timed.
(First confession: King's disappointment with white moderates)
4. That non-violent direct action precipitates violence
5. That racial problems will work resolve themselves over time
6. The King and his supporters are extremists
(Second confession: King's disappointment with the white clergy)
7. That the Birmingham police deserve praise
C. Conclusion**[i]**

On close reading, the structure of the text proves much more subtle than this schematic reduction indicates, but the outline does accurately represent the prominence of dialectically paired allegations and counterarguments.

The text is also dialectical in the sense that its argument develops within a dialogic form. While the public letter of the eight clergymen is not addressed to any specific person or persons, King's letter begins with their names followed by the salutation, "My Dear Fellow Clergymen." And the first paragraph continues in the idiom of direct address with King's "I" speaking in response to the "you" who are the authors of the earlier letter. The paragraph ends with a clear articulation of this relationship: "But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms" (84). This mode of address continues throughout the letter, and it is especially notable in the sentences that mark a new section of the text. Almost all of these sentences attribute a specific position to the clergymen that King expresses in the second person pronoun – e.g.: "You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws" (89). At times this dialogic quality is heightened through the use of rhetorical questions: "You may well ask, 'Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?' You are exactly right in your call for negotiation" (86). The letter, then, has a strong dialogic orientation.
Dialectic is also sometimes characterized by an expectation of reasonableness that interlocutors are supposed to fulfill, and King invokes this kind of standard both explicitly and implicitly. In the passage I have just quoted from the opening paragraph, King commits himself to respond in a patient and reasonable fashion, and he consistently sets out his arguments in clear, logical form. Moreover, as I will soon explain, the text sustains this attitude implicitly through its scrupulously

restrained and reasonable tone.

All told, the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" represents its author as a disciplined advocate engaged in rational argument with a specific adversary concerning well-defined and sharply opposed positions. In these respects, the letter has a dialectical character, and it invites, and should handsomely reward, the fine-grained argumentative analysis of contemporary dialecticians and informal logicians. The letter, however, also issues an appeal to action, and it powerfully illustrates the three special dimensions of rhetorical argumentation – embodiment, enactment, and evocation. I now want to turn to these matters and study the text from a rhetorical perspective.

4. Rhetorical Embodiment

Although King's letter literally addressed the eight Birmingham clergymen, it was never delivered to any of them personally, and in fact, they were not his intended audience. The clergymen functioned as a synecdoche, as a representation of the larger audience King wanted to reach, and his decision to respond to their letter and his manner of doing so were both strategic. The success of the Birmingham campaign, and of the SCLC's efforts in general, depended heavily on support from white moderates – people who were already inclined to disapprove of racial segregation and to feel uncomfortable about the discrepancy between their basic values and discriminatory public policies then in evidence throughout the South. The letter by the eight clergymen offered King an opportunity to embody this target audience and engage their concerns directly without appearing to manufacture either the occasion or the issues. Moreover, as Richard Fulkerson (1979:124) has noted, the choice of a specific and actual group as ostensible audience for the public letter allowed King to cultivate a personal tone and to project his own personality in ways that would have been impossible in a document addressed no one in particular.

King did not have to construct a synecdochic relationship between himself and the civil rights movement. That connection already existed in the public mind, and thus King's rhetorical problem was not to embody the movement in his persona, but to establish a persona that embodied the values and interests of his target audience. Much of the text is devoted to this task, and King's effort works along several lines. By direct statement, King associates himself with basic American principles of equality and liberty, endorses the "the American dream," and commends "those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the Founding

Fathers in the formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence" (100). Likewise, though in more fully realized expression, King also explicitly embeds himself within the Christian faith: "In deep disappointment, I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love… Yes, I love the church; I love her sacred walls. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson, and the great-grandson of preachers" (97). Here King's figuration overlaps at three levels of embodiment: Christianity is made physical through the Church as a walled physical space; King, coming from a lineage connected with that space, embodies his identity within those walls, and from this inside position his disappointment with the Church can be materialized only as tears of love. All of this figurative work presents King as someone who has the appropriate credentials to criticize the Church from within and to recall it to its own ideals.

King also embodies his solidarity with mainstream American values through the use of *ad verecundiam* appeals. The text is peppered with references to authoritative figures from American history, Judeo-Christian lore, and the Western intellectual tradition. These include: Paul, Socrates, Reinhold Niebuhr, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Buber, Paul Tilllich, Jesus, Amos, Martin Luther, John Bunyan, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, and T.S. Eliot, and King invokes these references to vindicate and explain his own actions. Thus, to take one notable example, in response to the charge that he is "an outsider," King cites Scriptural precedent for his behavior: "Beyond this, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the eighth-century prophets left their little villages and carried their 'thus saith the Lord' far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns; and just as the apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Graeco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular hometown" (84-85).

King is obviously concerned to dispel the perception that he is a literal outsider in Birmingham and an ideological outsider whose basic attitudes depart from respectable American opinion. The *ad verecundiam* appeals do double service in countering this image. First, by citing icons of accepted belief and faith, King associates himself with authorities who command unquestioned respect from his target audience, and this suggests affiliation with that audience. Secondly, the words and deeds of these respected figures, insofar as they appear to be the same

as or similar to King's words and deeds, become exemplars that justify King's position and open space for it within the horizons of Judeo-Christian orthodoxy. If Amos, Paul, Socrates, and even Jesus, behaved as agitators then it follows that agitation to expose and overcome injustice is no threat to the common tradition, but is instead something needed to renew and sustain its integrity.

5. Rhetorical Enactment

Embodiment and enactment are closely related rhetorical phenomena. In most texts, especially ones that are well made, they overlap, and it always requires careful interpretive work to distinguish them. Nevertheless, as I now hope to show, the distinction is worth making. Embodiment arises from what the text says, from the assertions and appeals that it makes. Enactment arises from what the text does. To understand this distinction, we need to think of an argumentative text not just as an inert product but also as a field of action that constructs representations and relationships as it unfolds – as a microcosm of the social world to which it is addressed. In this sense, texts construct a persona for the author, a persona for the audience, and a relationship (or a set of relationships between the two). Van Eemeren and Houtlosser, though they do not use my terminology, present an excellent example of such an enacted relationship in their analysis of a Shell Oil Company's advertorial when they note that the text addresses its audience as "a father would speak to his children" (1999: 490). Of course, the text never explicitly articulates this relationship; van Eemeren and Houtlosser infer its presence based on the tone and the attitude displayed as the argument proceeds, and once they disclose the parent/child relationship enacted in the text, they are able to make some important judgments about the character and motives of its author. The text behaves, as it were, in a certain way toward the audience, and from this behavior, the audience can make inferences about its maker.

In King's Letter, the process of enactment is complex and subtle, and it offers a complex but consistent representation of the author's character: He is depicted as energetic, active, committed to principles and committed to act in accordance with his principles, but also as poised, balanced, reasonable, and restrained. The dominant image is one of restrained energy, and this image is well calculated to diffuse the accusation that King is a radical who lacks good judgment and acts without a due regard for consequences.

Throughout the sequence of refutations, the text enacts balanced judgment through what Fulkerson (1979:127) calls a "dual pattern." King responds to the

allegations against him first on an immediate practical level and then on the level of principle, and as this pattern unfolds, the reader witnesses King exercising the kind of judgment most appropriate to deliberation – judgment that encompasses both particulars and principles, that engages both questions of expediency and honor. The first of King's refutations provides a clear illustration of this development. In responding to the charge that he is an "outsider", King begins by explaining that the Birmingham affiliate of the SCLC asked for his assistance, and so he is "here, along with several members of my staff, because we were invited here." But this is not the end of the matter, since beyond such particular concerns there is also a moral imperative that leads King to confront injustice just as the Hebrew prophets and the apostle Paul did. And, to place the issue on an even broader ground, King recognizes "the interrelatedness of all countries and states… Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all directly" (85). Thus, whether judgment rests on the concrete particulars of the case or on sweeping ethical principle, King should not be regarded as an outsider; his presence in Birmingham is both appropriate and right.

The second, third, and fourth refutational sections also employ this double structure, but it is in the sixth section, where King addresses the charge of extremism, that the technique achieves its most powerful articulation. King begins his response by expressing surprise that anyone would label him as an extremist, since in actuality he stands "in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community." On one side, there are those who simply acquiesce to injustice and do nothing, and on the other, there are the black nationalists who react to injustice with hatred and bitterness and come "perilously close to advocating violence." Between these extremes of complacency and angry despair, King offers the "more excellent way" of non-violent protest, and he acknowledges disappointment that this position would be dismissed as extremist. King, however, has a second thought on the matter, and he gradually gains "a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love – "'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.'" This *ad verecundiam* appeal continues through a long list of heroic figures (including Amos, Paul, Martin Luther, John Bunyan, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson) who are also linked to famous quotations expressing extreme ideas. And King concludes that the question is not whether "we will be

extremists" but whether we be extremists for love and justice or extremists for hate and injustice (92-94).

As other commentators (e.g. Fulkerson 1979: 128) have noted, this passage distinguishes between extremism understood as placement along a spectrum of existing positions and extremism understood in terms of intensity of conviction. By the first standard, King is not an extremist but rather a dialectically tempered moderate, since his position comes between and constructively synthesizes the antithetical forces of apathy and violence. By the second standard, however, King is an extremist since he is passionately committed in principle to act against and eradicate injustice, but as King's historical witnesses demonstrate, this form of extremism is not necessarily bad since it can function to preserve the cultural heritage. The whole movement of the passage reflects a combination of restraint and commitment that reflects favorably on the persona of the author and on the character of the movement with which he is identified.

Another notable feature of this passage is that when confronted with the charge of extremism, King reacts not with an expression of anger or indignity but disappointment. This sort of verbal restraint recurs throughout the Letter, and his choice of words in this respect consistently supports the image depicted by other aspects of the text. But King's restrained energy is even more powerfully represented in the structure of some of his sentences, where the syntax enacts restraint.

In the third refutational section of the letter, King offers a carefully modulated response to the charge that the demonstrations are untimely. African Americans, he reminds his readers, already have had to wait for 340 years for their rights, and it is no wonder that they are growing impatient. "Perhaps," he adds "it easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait'":

> But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in

little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son asking in agonizing pathos: "Daddy, why do while people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country trip and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger" and your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs.", when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of nobodiness; then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait (88-89).

The most obviously remarkable feature of this sentence is its length – 331 words by Fulkerson's count – which makes it by far the longest sentence in the text and probably one of the longest sentences in contemporary English prose. But the syntax of the sentence also ought to be noticed. Because it is structured in left-branching or periodic form, the syntactic complexity of the sentence develops through the accretion of dependent clauses that occur before the main clause. This arrangement suspends the completion of the sentence as a meaningful unit until the end, and so, to understand the sentence, the reader must wait until the final twelve words provide closure. Moreover, since the dependent clauses narrate a series of injuries, insults, and outrages, the whole development iconically represents the plight of the African American (cf. Klein 1981: 30-47). White readers, who have never directly suffered from the "stinging darts of segregation, must wait while this long list of grievances continues to assault their sensibilities, and they thereby experience, in vicarious form, the frustration of the African American. The sentence enacts and transmits that experience in a way that no propositional argument could accomplish.

Given the length of the sentence, the tension that mounts through it, and the vivacity with which it represents the effects of bigotry, we might expect it to end

on a note of outrage and anger, perhaps even with an accusation against those who ask King and his people to wait. Instead, however, the climax comes in the form of an understated address to the white audience: “Then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.” In this instance, the understatement probably works to heighten the emotional impact of the sentence, but it is also a striking enactment of King’s restraint. Indeed, I find it difficult to imagine a more appropriate textual representation of King’s pledge to proceed in reasonable and patient terms**[ii]**.

To sum up, enactment plays an important role in the argumentation of “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” If King is to reach his target audience, he needs to dispel the perception that he is a radical given to intemperate action and committed to views that fall outside the mainstream of American society. The text consistently represents King in a different light, and it does so not just by direct statement, but also by enacting balanced, temperate forms of judgment and by “speaking” in a voice that is aggrieved and determined yet still restrained and reasonable. At the end of the Letter, King articulates this theme in two nicely balanced sentences that encapsulate the persona he projects throughout the text:
If I have said anything in this letter that is an overstatement of the
the truth and is indicative of unreasonable impatience, I beg you to
forgive me. If I have said anything in this letter that is an understatement
of the truth an is indicative of my having a patience that makes me patient
with anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me (100).

6. Evocation
Evocation operates at a higher level of generality than embodiment or enactment, since it refers to the representation and apprehension of a situation as a whole. In their recent account of the concept, Walter Jost and Michael Hyde explain that evocation occurs through the realization of a pattern within a set of accumulated particulars. This realization must be vivid, and it must grasp something as “a whole within which everything else makes sense,” and it is achieved through persuasion (1997: 23). Approaching the matter from the dialectician’s perspective, Nicholas Rescher offers a similar account of the force of rhetorical persuasion. Rhetoric, Rescher maintains, can elicit agreement through synthetic expression that captures and highlights regions of our experience and brings them to conscious attention. This process entails a sense of fittingness with some overall scheme and arises, in some large measure, from the intrinsic appeal of

what is said (Rescher: 1998). In other words, evocation reframes or restructures perception of a situation because it summons up recognition of the situation both as an integral whole and as something that fits within our cultural inheritance, and this summoning is related to the power of the language used in the persuasive effort.

The "Letter from Birmingham Jail" exemplifies the workings of this evocative process. It speaks to a target audience of white moderates who sense a gap between their ideals and the discriminatory practices of their society, but who are also wary of radical change, anxious about protests that violate laws and stir tensions, and concerned about outside agitators who would use unrealistic ideals to disrupt the stability of the existing political and social order. King's rhetoric blunts these fears and opens space for a positive connection between his position and the heritage of his audience. As E. Culpepper Clark has argued, King was able to exploit cultural expectations implicit in the situation and transform them "into the controlling metaphor for interpreting non-violent civil disobedience." The letter changes King from a potentially intemperate and dangerous radical into a prophet recalling his people to their better selves and a leader whose voice "resonates with the Judeo-Christian struggle against human bondage" (1993:48-49).

But what is the relationship between evocation and argumentation? Clark suggests that the connection is not particularly strong, since the force of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" results from selecting the right metaphor at the right time under the right circumstances. That view, however, does not answer the question of how King was able to deploy that metaphor effectively, and when we consider the image involved in this case, the question becomes especially important. The prophetic voice comes from within the people it criticizes; it incarnates what is highest and best in the society and summons others to act on standards that the speaker shares with the listeners. The prophet is not an outsider or an observer, but a member of the tribe, and so to be a prophet among the Hebrews one must be a Hebrew. And to be a prophet among American white moderates? That is not a role that King inherits by birth or gains through any easy access. He must argue himself into it, and his letter is well designed for that purpose. It constructs arguments that connect the author and the audience even in the presence of disagreement between them, and it speaks in ways that enact and embody the persona of a good deliberator. And once he can plausibly assume

the role of deliberator, King is better able to position himself to speak from within the culture of his audience. I do not mean to say that this process is strictly linear – that argumentation is a first step and that evocation can come only after the arguments have done their work. The two seem to work together in a more interactive and less clearly demarcated fashion: As the force of King's argument accumulates, the evocative power of the text becomes more apparent, but as this evocation becomes more powerful, King's arguments assume greater clarity and force. Whatever the order of this relationship, however, I think it clear that it does develop within the text and that King's considerable achievement in speaking effectively as a prophet to a white audience is somehow related to the credentials that he establishes as a dialectician.

The process I have just described is somewhat paradoxical, since prophecy and argumentation ordinarily are assigned to different realms of activity. But perhaps the time has come for argumentation scholars to become more comfortable with paradoxes that shift categories and stimulate new and unexpected connections. With the decline of the formal deductive model and the essentialism associated with it, we can hardly expect our critical apparatus to stay quietly in place and support our old disciplinary assumptions. Thus, for example, Trudy Govier's logically focused study of the tu quoque appeal has led her to the discovery "that the force of an argument depends quite properly on more than its propositional content" (1999:20). Likewise my study of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" has led me to conclude that there is more to rhetorical evocation than time, chance, and imagery. Govier, I take it, still has an imperfect understanding of the non-propositional things that contribute to the force of an argument, and I confess an almost boundless ignorance about how dialectical argument constrains and enables rhetorical persuasion. What does seem beyond doubt is that we have something to learn from one another, and I suspect that the leaning will proceed faster and better if we attend to cases – and not to simple or obviously flawed cases – but to those that exhibit the best practices of argument. These are the cases that we most need to consider if we want to make the theory of argumentation not just an instrument for correcting errors of reasoning but a flexible, constructive resource for conducting the public business of scholars and citizens.

NOTES

[i] All references to the letter come from the version published in I Have a

Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World (San Francisco: Harper, 1986): 83-100. Specific page references are indicated parenthetically in the text.

[ii] Toward the end of the letter (98-99), King composes another very long sentence that sets forth a series of grievances and then is paired with a short sentence that expresses a restrained view in direct address. This sentence is not as long as the one quoted above nor is it in periodic in form. But it also aptly models King's restraint .

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Beyond Wartime Propaganda: Argumentation And Hostilities In The Age Of Information And Democracy

1. Short Abstract

The vogue currently enjoyed by the notion of a 'propaganda war' points to two assumptions as widely held as they are suspect: that war and argument are fundamentally incompatible; and that the overriding need to win a war demands and justifies an 'anything goes' type of spinning and manipulation. Such assumptions are unsupported by the history of warfare. They betray an inadequate understanding of war as continuation of political relations. And they fail in particular to take into consideration the specific historical context in which the anti-terror war is being waged. To win 'hearts and minds' in our age of information and democracy, wartime argumentation is the only effective and ethical means.

2. Long Abstract

A self-contradictory message is being conveyed by the sudden rise of 'propaganda

war' as a voguish topic in the current campaign against international terrorism. While *propaganda's* newly gained respectability underscores the urgent need to win 'hearts and minds' as a top objective of the on-going fight, the historical connotations the term carries with it virtually deny any significant role, in the pursuit of that very goal, to a normatively regulated, reasoned discourse, which alone holds the key to the minds to be won over.

Two assumptions underlie such a message and explain its inherent incoherence: that war and argument are fundamentally incompatible, and that the overriding objective of winning the war demands and justifies an 'anything goes' type of spinning and information manipulation. Despite their prima facie reasonableness, both assumptions involve gross oversimplification of the rhetorical situation concerned. Historically, public debates over whether the differences between conflicting parties are indeed beyond reconciliation and whether taking up arms is the only remedy for the clash of interests date back at least to the classical age. The very character of war as 'continuation of political relations', and the imperatives which the constant need to re-condition, regulate, and sustain such relations necessarily imposes, decide that behind-the-scenes, unpublicized public arguments would go on even or especially after the hostilities broke out.

While the absence of a generalizable interest between the warring parties would usually justify employing otherwise unethical rhetorical sleights of hand (e.g., disinformation, distorted communication) against each other or even as boosters for the morale of one's own side, wartime propaganda risks becoming more counterproductive than useful in our age of information, democracy, and globalization. The effectiveness of such propaganda is called into serious question when the Internet and the satellite TV are readily available throughout the world and attempts at one-sided control of information are rendered all but impossible. Trying to manipulate what the citizens know or to curtail their right to participate in what is basically a political process 'by other means' can only backfire (e.g. the Vietnam War) when the hostilities do not end quickly. A 'decent respect for the opinions' of an emerging global community and an emerging globalized public sphere dictates against using the war as an excuse for withdrawing from or suspending an on-going reasoned discourse among nations, cultures, civilizations.

Replacing 'wartime propaganda' with 'wartime argumentation', argumentatively engaging the diverse opinions and perspectives widely in circulation, making commitment not only to justifying the use of weapon, but to using bona fide justification as the most potent weapon of all: on these an ultimate victory against

international terrorism may well depend.

3. The Text – The Problem with a 'Propaganda War'.

No sooner had the current War on Terror started than the U.S. administration began to wage concurrently a large-scale propaganda campaign aimed at winning the 'hearts and minds' of the Arab-Muslim world. Alarmed and frustrated by the sympathy which popular opinions in that part of the world appeared to be showing toward the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack, and keenly aware of the need to deny terrorists of their 'breeding ground' as the only effective way of eradicating the scourge of terror, the Bush administration launched what the *New York Times* terms the 'most ambitious communications effort since World War II' (Becker). Coordinated directly from the White House and led by an old Madison Avenue hand, the PR offensive enjoyed unanimous political support from the American public, was endorsed by opinion-makers across the entire ideological spectrum, and had at its disposal every conceivable kind of resource, from access to influential mass media in the Middle East to the volunteered help from the Hollywood. Several months have passed since its inauguration in fall 2001, and yet, to the disappointment of many, the campaign does not seem to be producing the kind of result it has been expected to yield. A November 2001 *New York Times* column by veteran foreign affairs correspondent Thomas L. Friedman best captures the bitterness of the general disappointment. '[To] read some of the commentaries in the Arab press', Friedman writes, 'is to understand that bin Laden and Saddam Hussein still have a great deal of popular support. It is no easy trick to lose a P.R. war to two mass murderers — but we've been doing just that lately' ('One War, Two Fronts').

Friedman, who had been among the most enthusiastic champions of the communications offensive only a month or so earlier, now believed that '[the] most important way we win the public relations war is by first winning the real war' and that 'we can't win the PR war with polite arguments', which is as good as declaring that he had all but given up his hope of making people in the Arab-Muslim world see things differently through persuasive means, without resorting even to some indirect, situational kind of coercion. And yet although the 'real war' has long been won on the Afghan battlefield since that column of his was first published, the PR war, contrary to his prediction, remains bogged down in what increasingly looks like an exercise in futility. That even a shrewd and usually sharp-eyed observer on international affairs such as Friedman should have made

an uncharacteristic about-face in his attitude toward the 'propaganda war' and should have been so off the mark even in his re-assessment of the situation should surprise no one. The PR campaign's lack of progress was perhaps preordained from the very beginning, when the entire project was first conceived. For in piecing together a hodge-podge of resources and efforts, from 'words, film, newspaper headlines, radio broadcasts, and food drops' to 'demonising the enemy, spinning the truth, censoring information' (Blackhurst), within the framework of a gigantic 'propaganda' offensive or counter-offensive designed to win 'hearts and minds', the campaign had made a fatal conceptual mistake which all but sealed its fate.

This is the error of assuming that 'hearts and minds' can be won through means other than honest communication and reasoned persuasion, and that it is possible to secure the true adherence of an audience just by subjecting its members to a sophisticated, technically advanced form of propaganda. Propaganda, in its proper definition as an effort to induce a change of mind 'not through the give-and-take of argument and debate but through the manipulation of symbols and of our most basic human emotions' (Pratkanis and Aronson 5-6), certainly is capable of exerting tremendous influences on decision-making processes. Yet its primary techniques, such as 'spinning the truth' or 'censoring information', are meant to confuse rather than clarify, mislead rather than inform, bamboozle rather than enlighten. Its one-directional approach precludes the possibility of a genuine dialogic exchange. And in presupposing the gullibility of its target audience as one of its own conditions of possibility, it sows the seed of an outraged backlash later on destined to undo whatever short-term gains it may have succeeded in making. While it is often effective in momentarily disorienting its target audience and securing the kind of temporary attitudinal or behavioral change it desires, propaganda is eminently ill-fit for the kind of long-term or permanent reconfiguration of 'hearts and minds', which the need to deny bin Laden and his followers of their 'breeding ground' would demand.

The short-sightedness of thinking about all non-military efforts against terror in terms of propaganda is demonstrated, ironically, in the dubious effects which a right move by the U.S. administration seems to be producing. Instead of merely applying pressure on domestic and foreign media to exercise self-censorship concerning al-Qaeda's propaganda, the administration wisely adopts the policy of delivering a live rebuttal on Arab airwaves each time a bin Laden tape is aired by

al-Jezeera TV station. For the implementation of this policy, it has introduced what the *Time Magazine* hails as a 'new secret weapon' to 'the propaganda war', an Arabic-speaking former U.S. ambassador to Syria by the name of Christopher Ross, known, according to the same magazine, for his 'considerable experience and powers of persuasion in the Arab world'. Ross's performance is very positively assessed on this side of the Atlantic. The way the *Time Magazine* describes it, his 'rapid-fire real-time Arabic response – he was interviewed live within two hours of Bin Laden's broadcast – certainly gives bin Laden and the Taliban a run for their PR money', and '[anecdotal] reports from the region suggest Ross's rebuttal went over well with middle-class Arab audiences' ('The War for Muslim Hearts and Minds'). A very different evaluation, however, is being offered by Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said, who in a commentary published in *Al Ahram*, a leading Egyptian weekly, criticizes Ambassador Ross for offering only 'the standard U.S. government issue' in the 'long statement' he read and for '[choosing]', in response to sensitive follow-up questions about U.S. presence and policy in the Middle East, 'to insult [his Arab audience's] basic intelligence' by persisting in his line that 'only the US had the Arabs' interests at heart'. 'As an exercise in propaganda', Said concludes, 'Ross's performance was poor of course; but as an indication of the possibility of any serious change in US policy, Ross (inadvertently) at least did Arabs the service of indicating that they would have to be fools to believe in any such change' ('Suicidal Ignorance').

Said's perspective and assessment are, needless to point out, as interested as that of the *Time Magazine's.* Yet his complaints, supposedly on behalf of the Arab TV audience, against Ambassador Ross's alleged failure to take their basic understanding and perception seriously are not inconsistent with the role Ross is meant to play, i.e., a 'weapon' in a 'propaganda war', and with the character of his mission as a counter-propaganda move. As such, making sure the official line would prevail intact is necessarily Ross's overriding concern, and the communication process of such a 'live interview' is in no sense informed with a real interest in the kind of give-and-take with the audience that characterizes reasoned persuasion. Ambassador Ross, in other words, has no use for argumentation on such occasions, at least not for the kind which argumentation theorists have long held up as the norm for communicative discourse. The 'use of argumentation', Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca famously observe, 'implies… that value is attached to gaining the adherence of one's interlocutor by means of reasoned persuasion, and that one is not regarding him as an object, but

appealing to his free judgment'. It also means a 'readiness to see things from the viewpoint of the interlocutor, to restrict oneself to what he admits, and to give effect to one's own beliefs only to the extent that the person one is trying to persuade is willing to give his assent to them'. 'Every justification', the two scholars go on to quote E. Dupréel as stating, "is essentially a moderating act, a step toward greater communion of heart and mind' (55).

Given the widespread dissemination of this general understanding of argumentation as the only way toward a genuine 'communion of heart and mind', and given also the well-established association of 'propaganda' with highly negative notions such as 'deception', 'misrepresentation' and 'manipulation', it is puzzling why anyone should choose to dub a serious effort to win hearts and minds as a 'propaganda war', and why a patently illicit concept such as 'propaganda', one that has traditionally been reserved for the 'bad guys', should be enjoying the kind of popularity among intelligent and righteous opinion makers in the West. While commonsense would seem to suggest that the very announcement of one's intent to convert someone else to a new perspective through 'propagandist means' would instantly doom that effort, Richard Holbrooke, former U.S. ambassador to the U.N., apparently is not even aware of the possibility that this could be a problematic or counterproductive course of action when he starts an opinion piece in the *International Herald Tribune* with the following words:

Call it public diplomacy, or public affairs, or psychological warfare, or, if you really want to be blunt, propaganda. Whatever it is called, defining what this war is really about in the minds of the billion Muslims in the world will be of decisive and historic importance ('The Anti-terrorists Are Losing the Battle of Ideas').

Lumping together everything from 'public affairs' to 'psychological warfare' under the rubric of 'propaganda', and prescribing it as the means for 'defining what this war is really about in the minds of the billion Muslims', Holbrooke's comments are at once confusing and revealing. For in failing to make some distinctions of vital importance to the kind of communication he is talking about, he may inadvertently lead us to a second dubious assumption as the true culprit of the problematic situation.

Conspicuously absent from the program Holbrooke outlines here is an effort to distinguish between the 'billion Muslims' on the one hand and the small gang of 'enemy combatants' on the other; between those to be won over with reasoned

persuasion to a justified viewpoint and a just cause, and those to be crushed and eliminated through military actions; between honest and credible public communications aimed to promote an ever increasing 'communion of heart and mind', and a 'psychological warfare' designed to confound, disorient and demoralize members of terrorist organizations so that they can be more easily disposed of militarily. By failing to make these crucial distinctions, whatever effort made in the name of 'public diplomacy' or 'public affairs' risks losing its credibility completely, for the simple reason that people affected would tend to take it only as a fancier way of referring to what in effect is a campaign to hoodwink and mislead them. The 'billion' people in the Arab-Muslim world are likely to be further alienated when they find themselves treated as targets of the same psychological warfare against members of al-Qaeda and its allies. While it does not take special expertise to see these as the most probable outcome of the on-going 'propaganda campaign', all indications point to a deeply entrenched belief closely associated with the notion of a war as what has prevented sophisticated observers like Holbrooke and Friedman from seeing the situation as it really is.

Is War Compatible with Argumentation?

This is the belief that war is fundamentally incompatible with argumentation, and the overriding demand to win the war at all costs would justify an 'anything goes' type of spinning and information manipulation and would rule out the utility, throughout the war, of a normatively regulated, reasoned discourse as an appropriate mode of communication. This belief is not without its prima facie justification, especially if one has in her mind the World War II kind of total wars in which nations are engaged in a mortal combat against one another and the survival of entire peoples is at stake. Under those grim circumstances, indeed, one would be crazy to insist on, in Friedman's words, 'polite arguments' as the most appropriate form of public discourse for dealing with the citizens of an enemy state or even for reaching a national consensus on issues of policies or strategies. And yet, one has only to glance over the history of warfare to understand that even within that kind of horrible situation argumentation of one form or another persists. It never ceases to be useful. And the role it plays even in that kind of situation, though less visible, remains just as vital and indispensable.

If Thucydides's historical reconstruction is not to be rejected lightly, public arguments were being staged all through the Peloponnesian War. The open

debate at a Spartan assembly, first between the Corinthians and the Athenians, and then internally between the majority of Spartans and their king Archidamus, led to Sparta's decision to declare war on Athens and the beginning of hostilities that were to last for several decades (Thucydides 1.67-1.88). Even the Peloponnesian War's violent outbreak did not spell the end to reasoned persuasion. Rather, arguments and debates continued to be organized throughout the entire course of the conflict, as the basis for settling almost any conceivable kind of public issues related to the conduct of war (e.g., 337-3.49; 4.17-4.22). Lest this be dismissed as a semi-fictional anomaly, there is no lack of well-documented occasions in even modern world wars where argumentation was used as the chosen mode of communication. One might cite the intensive argumentative exchanges among members of the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Council of Ministers following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand on the eve of World War I (Keegan, 1999, 54), or the internal American debate over the unconditional surrender policy concerning Japan, which took place in the spring of 1945 and pitted the 'retentionists', those who favored retaining the imperial system of Japan as an incentive for its acceptance of a virtual unconditional surrender, against the 'abolitionists', who saw Japanese militarism and the warrior system as rooted in the Imperial system and argued strongly against keeping it as part of the deal for bringing peace to Japan (*Frank Downfall,* 215-221).

Even though the timing of these two cases, at the beginning and the concluding stage of a major war respectively, would disqualify them as an adequate basis for a broad generalization on wartime argumentation, one has every reason to believe that behind closed doors policy makers and military staff members never ceased to debate one another over strategic issues and the choice of general courses of action throughout both wars, that if anything, the grave national crisis confronting members of such a behind-the-scenes 'debate club' would tend to reduce, if not entirely eliminate, incentives and justification for partisan bickering or ideologically inspired political propaganda. Regardless of their pre-war affiliations or associations, those involved in the internal discussion simply cannot afford any more to continue spinning the truth, controlling information or misrepresenting the situation they knew of. There can be no 'business as usual'. An imposed imperative for argumentation in the most strict sense of the term would necessarily have brought about an entirely different pattern of communication behavior among the discussants. If argumentation suffers quantitatively during total wars, as a result of a dramatic reduction of the number

of people actually involved in it or of the occasions deemed appropriate for it, it gains qualitatively where it is allowed to continue.

The WWI- or WWII-like, 'total', zero-sum, annihilation kind of war, moreover, is just one particular, and not necessarily the most representative type of warfare. Any survey of the history of war-making would show, as Clausewitz points out in a discussion on the 'ends to be pursued' in a violent conflict in his classical study of warfare, that wars 'do not all involve the opponent's outright defeat'. Rather, they range from '*the destruction of the enemy's forces, the conquest of his territory, to a temporary occupation or invasion… and finally to passively awaiting the enemy's attacks*' (94, italics original). If argumentation in its more discreet and restricted form should continue to perform its vital function even during the two World Wars, one can easily imagine how much larger its scope of application, how much higher its visibility, must be under the more relaxed circumstances of a limited war or of a 'cold war' as Clausewitz has defined here – one in which the belligerents simply find it to their best interest to adopt the approach of 'passively awaiting the enemy's attacks'.

Clausewitz, however, would have scoffed at these pragmatic attempts to argue for the notion of a 'wartime argumentation'. As he sees it, there is a deeper, more fundamental, hence far potent reason with which to give the lie to the assumption that war and argument are mutually exclusive. For war, in the final analysis, is no more than a means to an end. And that very end to be served by whatever military action one takes is always politics or 'policy', which Clausewitz believes should be the unifying principle for conceptualizing and understanding a violent inter-group conflict in all its 'contradictory' manifestations:

This unity lies in *the concept that war is only a branch of political activity; that it is in no sense autonomous…* the only source of war is politics – the intercourse of governments and peoples; but it is apt to be assumed that war suspends that intercourse and replaces it by a wholly different condition, ruled by no law but its own. We maintain, on the contrary, that war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means… In essentials that intercourse continues, irrespective of the means it employs. The main lines along which military events progress… are political lines that continue throughout the war into the subsequent peace. How could it be otherwise? Do political relations between peoples and between their governments stop when diplomatic notes are no longer exchanged? Is war not just another expression of their thoughts, another form of speech or writing? Its grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not

its logic. (605, italics original)

From Clausewitz's insight that war is 'simply a continuation of political intercourse', that '*in essentials* that intercourse continues', and that war is just 'another form of speech or writing' for the expression of those 'political relations between peoples' that always exist, with its 'logic' identical to that of its counterpart 'genres' in peace time, one cannot but derive the conclusion that the normatively regulated, reasoned persuasion as a key component of the pre-war 'political intercourse' in any normally functioning society would *as a rule* endure, just as does its less reputable double, the strategically oriented, manipulative type of communication. The conclusion is entailed by the imperative to continue the kind of compromise-making and consensus-building that defines 'political intercourse' as such. It is presupposed also by the need to articulate and sustain whatever shared interests there may still remain after the breakout of a war. And it receives corroboration from any up-close look into how wartime communication among the parties involved tends to be conducted. Political scientist Charles Reynolds in his study of the politics of war, for example, directs our attention to the persistence of the normative as a key component in the decision-making by warring states:

An important aspect of political decision-making [during a war]… is the assessment of the likely consequences of a contemplated action in terms of countering action. Expectations of proper action are central to the underlying reasoning. What is deemed 'proper' action may have a normative component in that the adversary state may be expected to conform to constraints of a legal, moral, ethical as well as of an expedient, character… the use and threat of violence in this context is within a framework of rules that amounts to a common rationale that broadly has a restraining influence. The constraints that hold here, if indeed they do, are normative rather than material. (227)

Wartime Argumentation in the Age of Information and Democracy

Those unspoken rules and tacitly binding 'legal, moral, ethical' norms Reynolds refers to do not, of course, function merely as 'restraining influence' on the reasoning and the decision-making per se. They must necessarily also constitute the basis of, and impose restraints on, the kind of discursive exchanges indispensable to the decision making process, turning those exchanges into what we would call argumentative interactions. Knowing this, according to Reynolds, is 'of more than a passing interest to the citizens' affected by decisions about war

and peace, and is hence of crucial importance to democratic politics. For if citizens of a democracy are excluded from 'participation in or even knowledge of preparations for war' and precluded from a 'genuine knowledge of policy and its assumptions', they could 'fall easy prey to political manipulation', ending up having 'little choice in decisions to go to war' (264). To base such decisions on the consensus of an informed public, there is no way the government of any democracy could afford to rig and distort the political communication process through the release of 'a judicious mixture of selected information' or by making 'a bogus appeal to commonly held values and political beliefs', as Reynolds takes many governments of Western democracies to task for practicing during the Cold War period (264). Trying to manipulate what the citizens know or to curtail their right to participate fully in what is basically a political process 'by other means' would cause enormous harm to the democratic credentials of the government or administration concerned. And it is ill-advised even from a practical point of view: as what happened during the Vietnam War vividly illustrates, going to war without first achieving a genuinely informed, argumentatively induced, and rationally and morally justified national consensus is more than likely to backfire when the hostilities do not end quickly.

The imperative that such a consensus by a well-informed public be achieved, as an indispensable condition for a democracy to wage and engage in war, throws light on yet another highly questionable assumption underlying the ill-conceived 'propaganda' campaign: this time, it is the hopelessly outdated belief that separating a domestic discourse from a 'for international audience consumption only' discourse remains a possibility in our age of the Internet, satellite TV and globalized information network. For no one who thinks otherwise and who sees no way to compromise the demand for both a fully informed domestic public and a publicly justified course of action concerning war and peace would never have cast their vote or vote of confidence for that campaign in the first place. With the instant and global-reaching communication long a reality, to inform the domestic audience is to inform a world-wide audience, and, conversely, to withhold, control and otherwise manipulate information for bin Laden and his followers is to do so, to a significant extent, to the domestic audience as well.

A case in hand is Pentagon's decision to set up the Office of Strategic Influence and then to have it closed down hastily after news about the existence and operation of this shadowy office was leaked to the press. Meant to be the U.S.

Defense Department's special contribution to the 'propaganda war', the short-lived Office took up the task of 'planting false stories in the foreign press and running other covert activities to manipulate public opinion', through efforts that were to include 'using a mix of truthful news releases, phony stories and e-mails from disguised addresses to encourage the kind of news coverage abroad that the Pentagon considers advantageous' ('Managing the News'). This, of course, was not the reason that its program was terminated abruptly. Nor was it even a gradual realization that, as the *New York Times* observes, '[such] promiscuous blending of false and true can only undermine the credibility of all information coming out of the Pentagon and other parts of the government as well ('Managing the News'). Rather, what was instrumental in Pentagon's sudden change of mind was more likely its awareness that 'a report on the Agence France-Press wire or aired on Al Jazeera will, especially in the age of the Internet, appear in the U.S. media soon enough', and its claim that it lied only 'overseas' was utterly indefensible ('Artifice of War'). U.S. laws ban any government agency from 'undertaking propaganda activities in America'. The Defense Department could thus 'fall foul of the law if stories placed by the unit are picked up by the American media and later found to have been false' ('Pentagon "Ready to Lie" to Win War on Terror').

What this case has demonstrated is that with the collapse of the domestic/foreign or the internal/external dichotomy in communication, as a result of technological advances and of the accelerated process of globalization, those who wish to set up and run a two-track system that combines domestic argumentation with overseas propaganda have been undercut conceptually. Even more telltale is that classified formation about the secretive Pentagon office 'appeared to have been leaked', according to *London Times* Washington correspondent Damian Whitworth, 'by Pentagon officials who fiercely oppose [the program] and hope to ensure widespread outrage at home and abroad and increased scepticism about US statements on the War on Terror, especially in countries where they are expected to have an impact' ('Pentagon "Ready to Lie" to Win War on Terror') . That well-placed and well-informed domestic recipients of the kind of misinformation the 'propaganda war' machine has generated should hope to 'spread outrage' not just at home, but abroad adds further evidence to the fast disappearance of the distinction between the 'home' and the 'foreign' front as far as communication is concerned. It calls attention in particular to the intensity of the resentment which reducing consumers of information to objects of propaganda has aroused even in

war time.

Or particularly during war time. For it is in the proper management of 'personality and personal relations', as Clausewitz tells us, that the key to a quick success in war efforts may lie:
One further kind of action, of shortcuts to the goal, needs mention: one could call them argument *ad hominem*. Is there a field of human affairs where personal relations do not count, where the sparks they strike do not leap across all practical considerations? The personalities of statesmen and soldiers are such important factors that in war above all it is vital not to underrate them… It can be said… that these questions of personality and personal relations raise the number of possible ways of achieving the goal of policy to infinity. To think of these shortcuts as rare exceptions, or to minimize the difference they can make to the conduct of war, would be to underrate them. (94)

Perhaps keenly aware of their potentials for '[raising] the number of possible ways of achieving the goal of policy [i.e. the end of war or that of which war is a mere continuation in other means] *to infinity*', Clause does not specify what he exactly had in mind when he put down these somewhat ambiguous words. He might well be talking about addressing the 'statesmen and soldiers' on both camps and taking measures both to boost the morale of one's own side and to demoralize the enemies simultaneously. One thing, however, is clear: that by 'argument *ad hominem*' he does not refer to that fallacious, deceptive kind of reasoning we use it to signify nowadays. Rather, he means it to be 'arguments' that truly appeal to human psyche and effectively promote the right kind of human relations. For him, a wartime argumentation (as an amoral concept) is something that 'it is vital not to underrate'. For us today, both moral and strategic imperatives would dictate that we substitute a wartime argumentation to the on-going but non-productive 'propaganda war', as the only true 'shortcut' to the goal of rooting out terrorism.

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